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# HouseBeautiful Live in the home of your dreams!

Welcome to an exciting new magazine, Create Your Dream Home, from House Beautiful

At a time when there's a shortage of housing for all ages and lifestyles, from singletons and couples to growing families, empty nesters and retired people, *Create Your Dream Home* combines expert advice with real-life examples of how you can renovate, extend or build to fashion a living space that's stylish and unique.

- If you're up for the challenge of self-building from scratch, we provide all the know-how to get you off the starting blocks, from finding land to securing the services of a good architect (p40). But if that feels a little daunting, turn to p38 to learn more about custom-built homes, an exciting new concept that combines the security of buying a brand-new home ready to move into with the chance to choose the room sizes, exterior finish, kitchen, bathroom and flooring.
- And on p42 we introduce the House Beautiful Homes collection four stunning bespoke home designs that reflect the style and practicality that are synonymous with the House Beautiful brand. House Beautiful Homes can be bought off the shelf in kit form but customised, personalised, delivered to the site and erected within 24 hours. If you want to learn more, turn to p42 or visit housebeautiful.co.uk to register your interest. Whichever style you choose, creating the home of your dreams has just got that bit easier!

Julia Goodwin, Editor
Follow me on twitter @JuliaHouseBEd





Top Artist's impression of the luxury four-bedroom Mulberry from the House Beautiful Homes collection – see p44 for more information Above Find out how Scandi-style cedar cladding transformed a 1960s Cambridgeshire bungalow on p84



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# From dream to REALITY

Architect and TV presenter George Clarke shares his passion for self-build, community and multi-generational living, with exciting and creative ideas that could change your life

WORDS AMANDA CABLE
PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS TERRY/CONTOUR BY
GETTY IMAGES, PLUM PICTURES

f George Clarke were going to write a slogan for anyone thinking about building their own home, it would read: Be brave but go for it – and seek input from the experts.

'This is my advice to anyone who's considering a self-build. It does take real courage and self-belief, but people in the UK have plenty of that,' he says. 'There's a great incentive too – the chance to create a place with your own personal stamp at a fraction of the price it would otherwise cost.

'If you build your own home, it's usually something you wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. But with this type of project, you tend to be the builder and the main contractor, and you're managing every stage of the process. Nobody else is making a profit. You get the home of your dreams at a better value.'

George pauses and adds with a smile:
'Now, what could be better than that?'

An architect who has renovated his own home and travelled the land admiring self-build and renovation projects for his TV shows *The Restoration Man* and *George Clarke's Amazing Spaces*, George understands the rollercoaster world of self-builds more than anyone else.

'The biggest problem is that we live on a small island, and there's very little land made available for this kind of construction,' he says. 'We've the lowest number of self-build projects per capita, less than Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It's ironic that we make popular TV programmes such as *The* 

Restoration Man and Grand Designs and yet people are still struggling to get their hands on land. One council told me that out of 3,500 new homes that had gone up over the past five years, just 10 were self-build.'

But the tide, it seems, is turning. 'That very council was launching a pilot scheme to test the need for self-build,' says George. 'I want the Government and local councils to provide their own schemes.'

As the devoted father of three young children, George is particularly passionate about the future of multi-generational living – and how self-build can help.

'Every parent like me thinks about the future,' he says. 'We worry about our parents, who are getting older and how we may have to look after them, and we wonder if our own children are ever going to be able to move out and afford a place of their own.

'Often parents have equity or available funds in the bank, while sons and daughters have the energy and enthusiasm to build their own property. So parents may be able to fund a multi-generational home, while the younger generation make it a physical reality.

'Multi-generational living is not just about adapting a modular home that's big enough for everyone. A great alternative, which I've seen work well, is parents self-building on land they own so that their children can live, quite literally, in the garden.

'I also know families who have a main house and have *Continued over next page* 





converted a barn for their kids to live in. One couple I met during filming one of my TV shows bought land 30 years ago and constructed their own house. Then, when their son was 17 and couldn't afford to move out, the father and son built a little studio on the land for just £10,000 - a clever and really affordable option.

'If every parent would consider it, it's far cheaper to self-build than to spend £250,000 on a tiny two-bedroom flat. Young people don't want to be burdened with massive mortgages, and they're finding more inventive and creative ways of getting on the property ladder.'

According to George, there's plenty of inspiration from abroad

'IT'S FAR CHEAPER TO SELF-BUILD THAN TO SPEND £250,000 ON A TINY TWO-BEDROOM FLAT'

to draw on. 'In Australia and New Zealand, where land is freely available, it's widely accepted that 60-80 per cent of young people will build their own homes. It's part of their culture – and we need to take inspiration from that,' he says.

As more opportunities are emerging for self-build, the quality of modular housing is getting better too. 'Everyone thinks back to the sixties and seventies, when modular building meant leaky prefabs at school or concrete constructions that fell apart,' says George. 'This has left us with a cultural preconception of nasty, ugly, boxy buildings. But the products now are so much better. Look at how much

glass technology has moved on. Windows are better, insulation is better and boilers are better.

'There are some great modular homes out there, and it makes perfect sense with our weather to construct houses in controlled conditions, rather than in an antiquated way where we build outside in wet, windy weather, laying foundations and waiting for plaster to dry.

'Think of how we mass produce cars, mobile phones and tumble dryers, all highly engineered in controlled conditions. We need to invest the same sort of money into building houses in an intelligent way.'

George cites the work of architect Walter Segal, who developed a simple

> timber-framed self-build method in the seventies, which eliminated the need for wet trades such as bricklaying and plastering.

'Culturally, his ideas didn't take off, but he promoted the idea of a

community self-build,' says George.
'Around 10 years ago, this became
a reality in the outskirts of Bristol,
when a large developer was bidding
for a site of land. A group of local
residents who didn't want a huge
building site all came together and
bought the land themselves.

'They set up their own company to finance the project and built Scandinavian-style timber houses to live in. They lavished care, attention and detail on their new homes, landscaped the surrounding area and designed their own neighbourhood, including a village green and community centre. These incredible people pulled together

and, against the odds, built an entire community. I'd love to see other such groups working together to create their own future.'

George concedes that increasing the numbers of self-build alone are never going to solve the housing crisis, and that we do need the big house builders to create the huge number of homes that are needed to meet the annual target of between 250,000 and 300,000.

'But,' he says, 'supposing everyone in Britain who wanted to self-build put £1,000 into a national company and through crowd funding, they could become the biggest house developer in Britain. Then, whenever land came up they could buy it through the development company, and those who had donated the money could build their houses in turn. I'd love to see this become a reality as it changes the whole building culture of our country.'

In the meantime, if you feel inspired to self-build, start by keeping your ears to the ground locally. Look for plots of land (see George's essential tips, opposite), keep in contact with landowners, and be prepared to knock on doors. 'Try to find land before it gets to the market, even if it's the end of someone's back garden, which you think they'll sell off,' he says. 'Look for advice on the National Custom & Self Build Association's website (nacsba.org.uk). And then be brave and go for it!'



• George presents The Restoration Man and George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. His book George Clarke's More Amazing Spaces with Jane Field-Lewis (£20, Quadrille) is out now

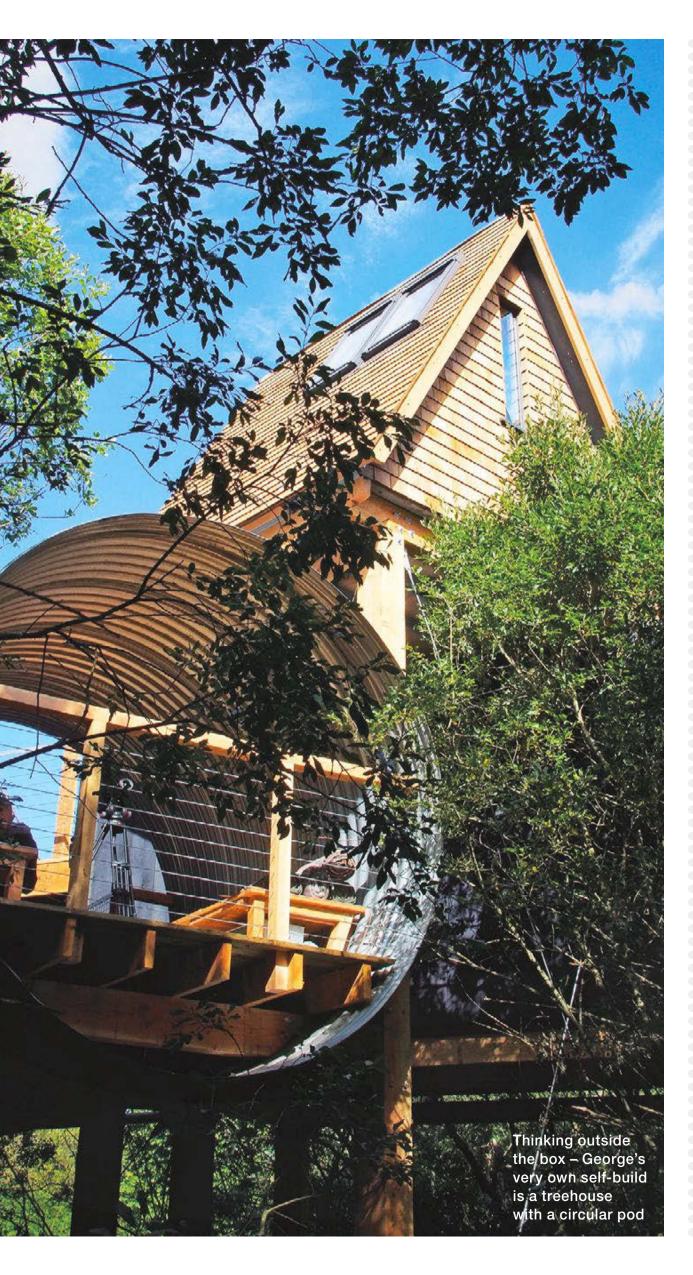
# Dream homes on a budget



There's no denying self-build is an excellent, cost-effective option for those who know exactly what they want. And the good news is we've finally started to see more affordable ways for people to own their own homes.

'There are great schemes in places such as Stoke-on-Trent and Wales, where councils have sold terraced houses that are totally rundown for just a quid to owners who'll refurbish them,' explains George. 'These are young people who are prepared to get their hands dirty, and for an outlay of £10,000-£15,000 they've ended up with a home that would have cost them £70,000.'

These schemes have the extra benefit of regenerating communities that are falling into decline, and George is optimistic about their potential. 'It proves that clever initiatives and a generation of young people who are desperate for home ownership really works,' he says. 'There are a number of empty Victorian terraces where councils claim nobody wants to live. Why not offer these to students or young families who'd give their right arm for a place to renovate?'



# George's tips for a STRESS-FREE SELF-BUILD

- Find land by getting to know the local area, contacting landowners and browsing specialist property websites such as plotbrowser.com and plotfinder.net. If a piece of land does come up, you'll need to move very quickly to research the area in depth as the sale goes through.
- You've probably had a certain style of dream house in mind, either traditional or modern. If you get the chance, talk to local planners and architects, tell them about the piece of land you've either bought or want to buy, and get a feel for what may be possible or what won't be acceptable. In some areas there's a precedent for modern buildings in old villages, but other planning authorities won't accept this. Equally, the land may be in a conservation area, which has its own restrictions.
- Timber-frame houses are a fabulous idea if you're looking for a speedy build. Erection of the main structure is fairly quick, and you can then work indoors with a roof over your head.
- Be prepared to compromise in some way. I filmed a young couple for The Restoration Man who were working on a building from the 1750s. The budget was really tight, and once they started they discovered they had to spend an extra £25,000 on the roof and interior. But they also realised this was going to be a home for life, and so they worked harder on the build themselves and cut down the labour costs to free up the extra money for the roof. They were investing now for the long-term future of their building and their family. So my advice is, if you don't have the funds, look for other areas where you can free up some capital but do the job right from the outset.
- Know what's important don't compromise on the structure or the roof, the insulation or plumbing.



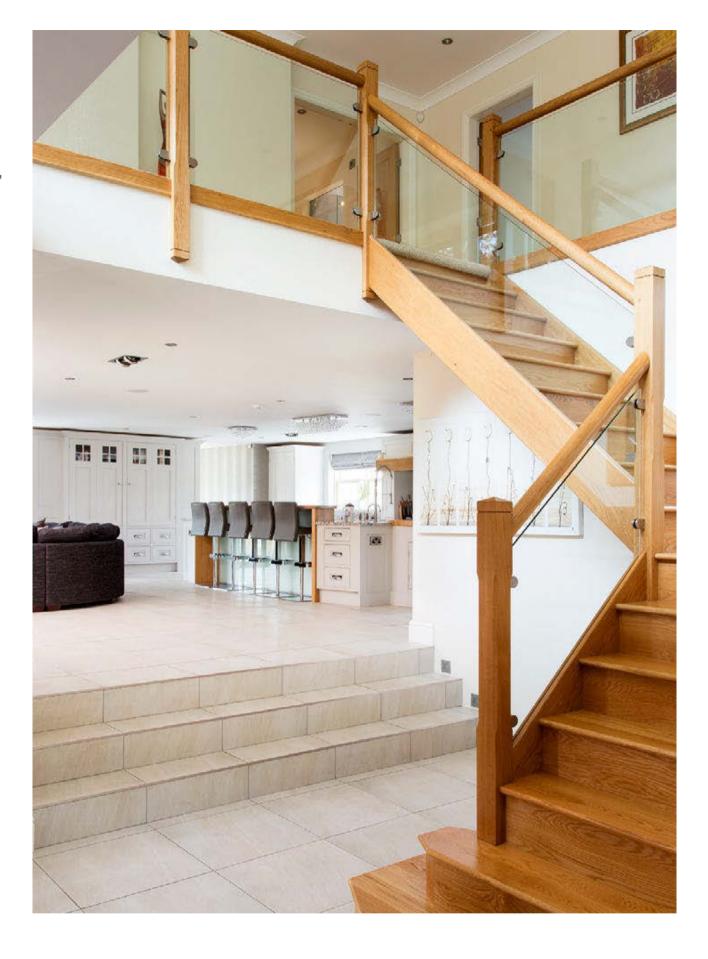


# Staircase

The glass and oak double staircase was made by Wakefield joiner David Rigby and it dominates the entrance hall. The mellow wood adds warmth, while the glass panels create an open, airy feel and allow light to flow through the space

# Kitchen

Michelle's kitchen is exactly as she wanted it, with a large breakfast bar and a champagne cooler recessed into the granite worktop. 'We looked around all the high-end designers in Harrogate and York,' says Michelle. 'Then I found a local company, Paul Barrow of Wakefield, that was closer to hand and could do it for a better price'



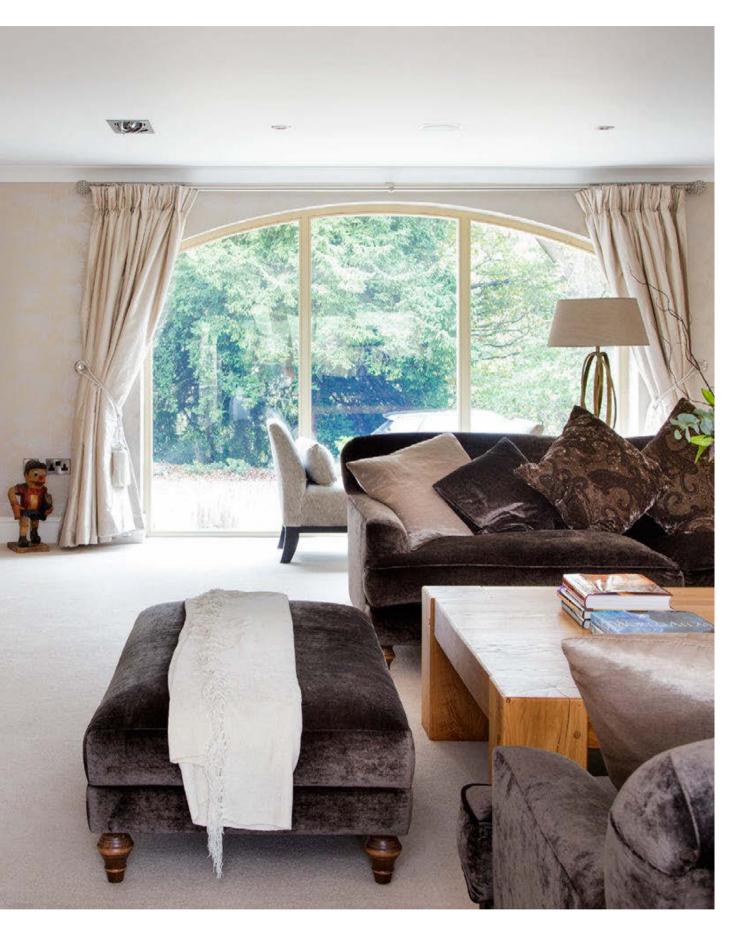
ichelle Wigglesworth, 45, and her husband Gary, 48, devoted years to finding the perfect home for their family, before it dawned on them that what they wanted simply didn't exist – yet. The couple and their children, Naomi, 15, Oliver, 14, and Mallory, six, were living in the village of Darton, South Yorkshire, in a four-bedroom new-build house when they started their search for a bigger home. 'We kept finding the right house but in the wrong place,' says Michelle, a midwife. 'After several years, we got very frustrated and finally we decided that the only way to get what we wanted was to build it ourselves.

'We looked for plots of land advertised in local newspapers, via estate agents and at land sales. And we did a lot of local pestering.' In the end, the couple chose Cawthorne, a rural village just a few miles from the stunning Peak District National Park. 'We wanted to be in the village, within walking distance of the post office, pub and other local services,' says Gary, a company director.

The couple's half-acre plot was advertised in *The Barnsley Chronicle* and had previously belonged to a local large estate. There were a lot of trees on the site, notably huge conifers. 'Originally, the estate agent said the trees had to stay,' says Gary. 'But after some negotiation we managed to persuade the council to lift the rules.' The land cost £380,000 and was financed from savings – 'we emptied every pocket,' says Gary – and the sale of the family's previous house. The couple also took out a mortgage on their new property to cover some of the £725,000 building cost.

The finished house, Four Oaks, is packed with hi-tech features, from gas-powered underfloor heating and solar panels to a cinema room in the loft, but it's very much a Continued over next page





# Elegant decor

Michelle describes her style as 'luxury contemporary'. She's used classic neutral colours, such as soothing caramel and taupe, and tactile furnishing fabrics, including rich leather and sumptuous velvet. All of these allow the architectural features of the house, such as the glorious arched windows, to shine through

# Living room

'We wanted a large sitting room with two sofas opposite each other in front of the fire,' explains Michelle. 'As a family we spend a lot of time just sitting, talking and playing games. We don't watch a lot of television, so we didn't want all the focus to be on a TV set. The woodburning stove makes a lovely focal point for us'

traditional home at heart, built by skilled local tradesmen using natural materials, such as wood and stone. It was designed by Barnsley-based architect Andrew Bailey, an old school friend of Gary's. The main challenges were the size of the site – half an acre isn't that large in self-build terms – and working out how best to position the building to make the most of the living room's large arched window, which overlooks the entrance courtyard and creates an eyecatching first impression.

'We looked at lots of other houses for inspiration,' explains Michelle. 'Gary and I would drive around different villages, taking photographs, as well as poring over magazines and brochures. We liked the interplay of stone, oak and brick that we saw in older properties, and decided this was what we wanted for our house.'

The couple chose a beautiful sandstone from Traditional Stone,

a supplier in nearby Horbury Bridge, which sourced the material from an old school that had been demolished. However, disaster struck when the supply ran out before the build was finished. 'We were at our wits' end,' says Michelle. 'We'd chosen this stone especially because it had a lovely variety of colours – dark brown, light brown, pink – and our builder Gareth had taken great care to variegate it as he laid it. Luckily, in the end, the suppliers did manage to find another source, and it was all carefully matched in.'

Gary took six months off work to be involved in the project, visiting the site every other day, ordering materials, dealing with the various suppliers and working in conjunction with the builder. He also had the chance to get his hands dirty. 'I was there when the roof was put on,' he says, 'so I feel as though I've had a part in it.'

Every element of the project was

Continued over next page

'WE WANTED A HOME WE COULD TRULY call our own,' SAYS MICHELLE





# Bathroom

Large-scale metallic-effect tiles contrast with the crisp white sanitaryware to give this room a sleek, modern look

# Landing

The staircase leads to both sides of the spacious and light-filled landing. The windows can be opened fully to create a veranda effect, while a magnificent modern crystal chandelier, sourced through The Lite Spot in Barnsley, is a striking feature

# Main bedroom

All five bedrooms are ensuite, while the elegant master bedroom also has a sunny balcony

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE





carefully considered and carried out by top craftsmen. All 39 windows were handmade by Wakefield joiner David Rigby and his son, who also built the external doors and some of the furniture.

Four Oaks looks relatively compact from the exterior, but behind the stunning oversized front door is a range of rooms tailored to this busy family's needs. The large, open-plan kitchen is the hub of the house, with a huge sofa that everyone gravitates to. From the beginning, Michelle knew exactly what she wanted from this space, and top of the list was a champagne cooler, recessed into the polished granite worktop. 'It was a must-have,' she smiles. 'Seriously, designing your own kitchen allows you to have things where you want them. That's why we have a large dresser between the dining and cooking areas, so when we have guests we don't have to see the mess in the kitchen while we eat.' As well as an

elegant living room and reading room, there's a snug/TV room where the children enjoy hanging out with their friends. Upstairs there are five bedrooms, all ensuite, with a balcony – another of Michelle's must-haves – off the master bedroom. There is also a playroom, plus practical areas such as a linen room.

In the garden there's a summerhouse, as well as an outside kitchen with two barbecues, a Belfast sink and a herb garden. A rainwater-harvesting system supplies water for the outdoor sprinklers along with the loos and washing machine. The only thing missing, says Gary, is a bigger boot room. 'I really wish we'd found more space for this, especially now we have our dog, Bruno.'

'We probably spent more on building this house than we had planned to, but that's not the point really,' says Michelle. 'We wanted a place that we could truly call our own.'

# A NATURAL LOOK

There's a long heritage of using beautiful local stone in British construction



# **CLASSIC** BEAUTY

Self-builders often like the idea of using reclaimed stone because the weathered look gives a traditional feel and blends into the landscape more easily. But taking stone from one building to create another can be problematic – there's a risk that you may not have the right quantity to

finish the job, as the Wigglesworth family discovered (see p10). However, there are companies that keep stocks of reclaimed stone, which can be hand-selected and matched to your build. Random reclaimed stone (see A Random Approach, opposite) is supplied in non-uniform shapes and sizes

so it's less expensive than dressed stone, but it takes more planning to work out the quantity needed. Costs vary depending on the type of stone, quality and condition, but using reclaimed stock is usually cheaper than buying new. An online search is the easiest way to locate a supplier near you.









### SANDSTONE

- Hardwearing and strong.
- Colours vary from light yellow/brown to red/ brown and blue/grey.
- Yorkstone, originally from Yorkshire, is light brown but gets darker when weathered.
- Horsham stone from Sussex is buff coloured with a rippled look that weathers into yellows, browns and blues.
- A soft rock, it's easy to shape but still durable.
- Thinly bedded sandstone is good for paving/roofing, while thicker bedded sandstone is ideal for walls.

### LIMESTONE

- Durable despite being a relatively soft rock, it's a great choice for building.
- Sourced mainly from southern England but there are quarries in Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria.
- Cotswold stone varies from honey shades in the north of the region to almost white in the south.
- Blue Lias from southwest England is blue/grev as a result of its iron content.
- Can be used for paving, walling and masonry.
- May be vulnerable to acid rain over time.

### **GRANITE**

- Hard and robust.
- Most is imported but some is still quarried in Cornwall and Scotland.
- It's blasted out of the rock face and as there are no natural straight planes, every face is cut before use for a uniform look.
- There's little structural maintenance required as it isn't prone to weathering.
- Largely grey, granite can have white or pink tints and it darkens over time.
- Commonly used for kitchen worktops.
- Ideal for using on external or interior walls.

- Durable and resistant to extreme weather, pollution and lichen, slate is ideal for using on external roofs.
- There are quarries and mines in Cornwall, North Wales and the Lake District.
- It's most commonly grey, but variations include olive green and purple.
- Most roofing slate has a guarantee of between 100 and 300 years.
- Great for walling as it's easy to work with, hardwearing and durable.
- Walling slate costs up to £500 per tonne, which will cover three square metres.



is vital when building external

walls from natural stone. 'Hard **cement mortar** retains water and, when used with soft stones such as sandstone and limestone, can lead to damp,' says Martin Kirk, director of Kirk Natural Stone Developments. Lime mortar is porous, allowing the stonework to breathe and adjust to temperature changes. It's also less likely to crack and let water in. However, it takes longer than cement to set and some types don't harden below 5°C, so

research products well and time

your build for warmer months.



# A random approach?

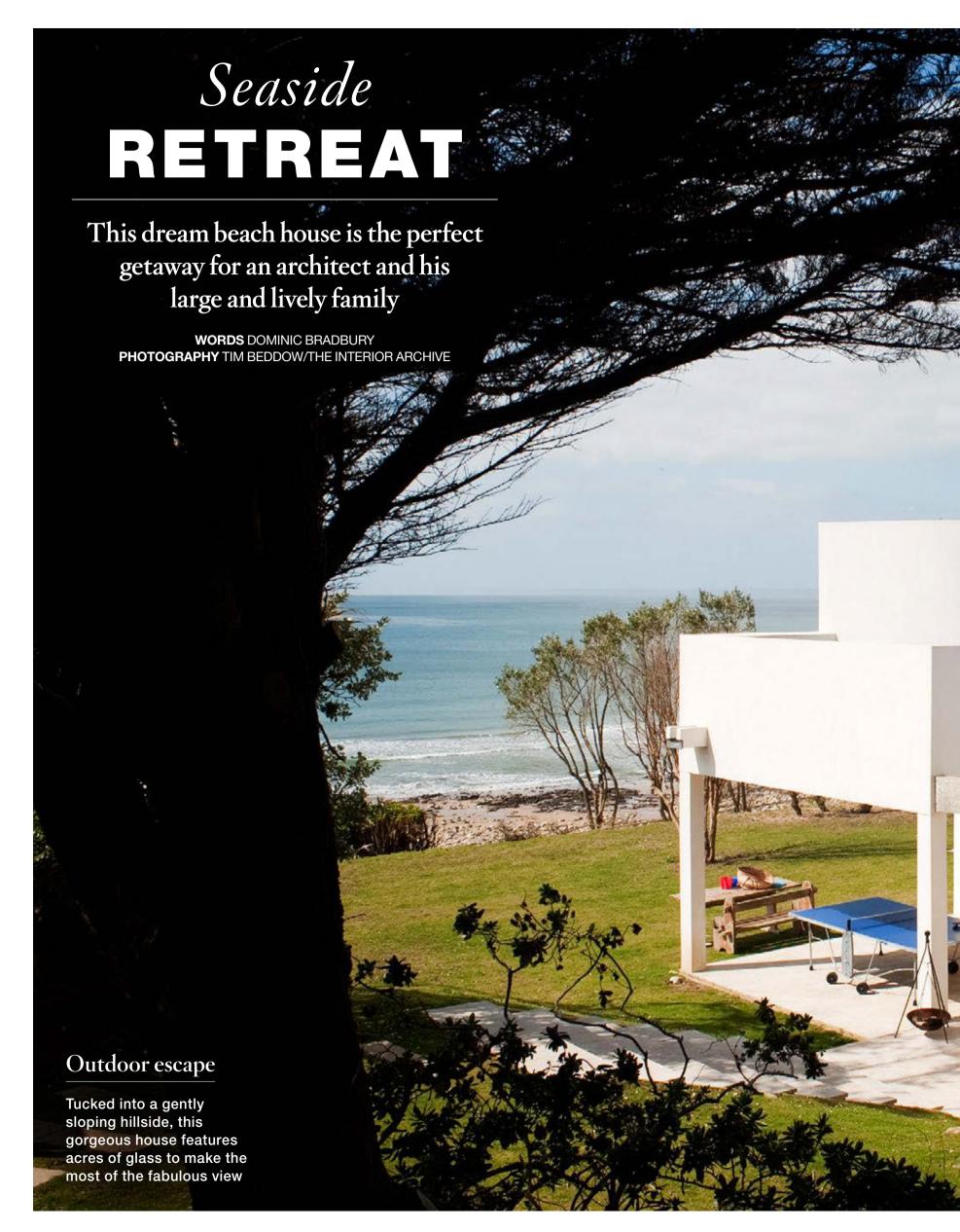
There are two effects that can be achieved with stone - dressed or random.

Dressed stone has been sawn into regular shapes so it's more costly, but it gives a smart and uniform look.

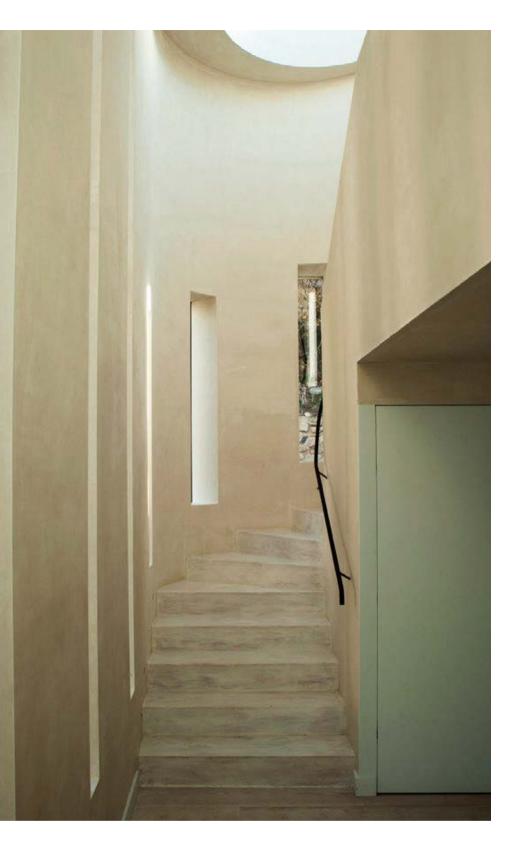
Random stone is more irregular and cheaper, but building costs are greater as considerably more mortar is needed to fill the spaces between stones.

There's no difference in durability between each type. The one you choose depends on the look you want to achieve for your property and your budget. But be warned that you'd need a traditional stonemason to construct a random stone wall. 'It's an artisan field and there's a skill to getting it right,' explains Martin Kirk, director of Kirk Natural Stone Developments, 'while with sawn stone any good bricklayer could do the job; it's just the stones are slightly larger and heavier than bricks.'

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE







# Stairway

Slot windows rise with the sculptural stairway. The plaster was left unpainted and untreated. 'It looks fantastic – like old Venetian plaster,' says Alex, below with Susanna and Raffe

# Living space

The heart of the house is a see-through living space with glass front and back. From the back, passers-by can see the 'Love' art on the landing, which Alex bought in East Africa



ome opportunities are just too tempting to ignore, even when they come out of the blue. So it proved for architect Alex Michaelis when a good friend tipped him off about a derelict cottage in Cornwall, right next to the beach, which he had stumbled across while looking on the internet.

The discovery marked the start of an adventure in design that eventually resulted in a self-built home by the sea for Alex and his art consultant partner Susanna Bell, who between them have seven children, Zac, 15, Kit and Olivia, both 13, Ro and Orlando, both 11, Sam, six, and Raffe, four.

'We drove down to take a look at the property, and it was the most amazing site I have ever seen, with these big, open skies and an incredible 180-degree view of the sea,' says Alex, who is a founding partner, with Tim Boyd, of London-based architecture practice Michaelis Boyd.

'There was a cottage overlooking the sandy beach with some land around it and all for the same price as a garage in London,' says Alex. 'I just couldn't resist – it was so beautiful.'

At first the Michaelis family thought they might have to content themselves with a straightforward update of the existing cottage. But Alex soon found that the building was literally falling apart, with the stone walls crumbling away. So he and Susanna decided to knock it down and Alex designed a new house to take its place: a two-storey home with a grass roof, tucked into the gently sloping site.

'I camped out there a couple of times before I actually designed the property,' says Alex. 'The main thing was to make the most of the view from the house. Even in the middle of winter, when the rain is horizontal against the windows, you still get this amazing panorama of the ocean.'

During his early visits to the site, Alex also noticed the brightness of the stars and moon, so he included a series of skylights for framing the night sky as well as bringing in *Continued over next page*  'IT WAS THE **most amazing place** I'D EVER SEEN, WITH BIG, OPEN SKIES AND AN INCREDIBLE 180-DEGREE VIEW OF THE SEA,' SAYS ALEX







extra sunlight during the day. The main, open-plan living area faces the beach with glazing front and back to allow the eye to pass right through this part of the house and connect with the water.

'Getting planning permission was quite tough, but we had a very forward-thinking council,' says Alex, whose practice recently landed the task of designing the interiors of 250 apartments at London's Battersea Power Station, within Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's landmark building. 'The house has four bedrooms, so it's not massive, and because it's dug into the land at the back, you can walk past and not really see the building at all. The green roof helps as well – it's quite discreet.'

Inside, the main seating zone is arranged around a woodburning stove, while the nearby dining table is perfectly positioned for sea-gazing. The adjacent kitchen is a crisp, modern Bulthaup design with white Corian worktops. By the winding stairs, slot windows bring in sunlight and offer glimpses of the sky, while

upstairs there are three bedrooms, with a bunk room for the children tucked away on the ground floor.

The interiors are simple, with bare white-plaster walls and a mix of Scandi-style furniture from Habitat and Ikea, along with an occasional standout piece, such as the pebble chair by Australian designer Roslyn Campbell, which sits by the woodburner.

It's a perfect holiday retreat and weekend escape for the Michaelis family, and all the children are learning to surf nearby. But it's also somewhere Alex can escape to and catch up on work, without the constant office distractions of phone and email.

'I love sitting at the dining table, looking at the sea and working,' he says. 'It's incredibly peaceful, and you can get so much done here. It's such a calm place to be, with the ever-changing sky and the sea view. You can sit there forever just looking at it and getting into a pattern of being completely relaxed.'

Find out more about Michaelis Boyd Architects at michaelisboyd.com

Continued over page





# Bathroom

A large window frames a showstopping view of the beach and the sea beyond. The roll-top bath came from The Water Monopoly, and the blue mosaic tiles on the window ledge are from Bisazza

# Bedroom

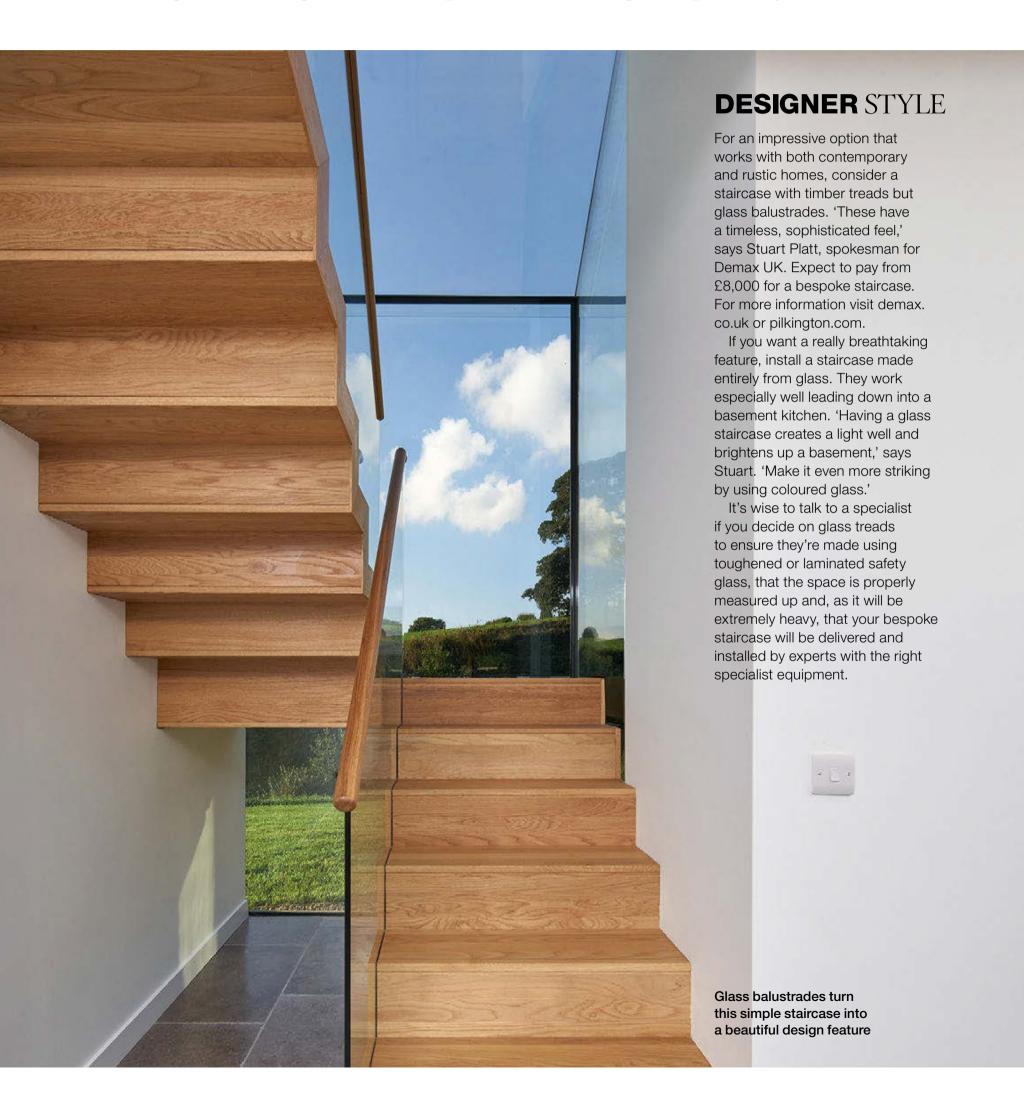
There's no real master bedroom in the house, as the three upstairs rooms were designed with similar proportions. This ensuite can be divided from the bedroom with a sliding door, while the aqua blues and greens are a nod to the house's coastal location. An Ikea bed and Habitat bedside table are simple and understated

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE



# **CLEAR VISION**

Use glass to add light, a sense of space and a stunning focal point to your home





# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

From inset windows to glazed walls, there are a number of effective and great-looking ways to bring light into your home.

• Be creative with roof lights. These windows (above) from Bartholomew run the full length and width of the extension, replacing part of the roof. They bring lots of light into a dark

kitchen that receives no direct sunlight, while leaving wall space for units and appliances.

• Build a glass wall around your front door to flood the hallway with light and open out the space. Try Apeer's Modo collection, from £2,000, or the Conservation entrance door set, from around £3,870, Mumford & Wood.



# THE CRITTALL **CHOICE**

They were the height of fashion in the twenties and thirties, and now the retro look of Crittall windows is making a comeback. The distinctive slimline frames create a fabulous open feel and give character. Made in Britain from steel, they're specially treated to last for 60 years or more, and can be fitted with high-performance double glazing, keeping out cold in winter, and heat and noise in summer. Try the Crittall Homelight range (above), from £407 for a single steel window.



# In mid air

Replacing whole walls with glass is achievable thanks to structural glazing, which does away with the need for a frame to enclose the glass. It's also what makes the popular minimalist glass box extension possible. Structural glazing consists of toughened, selfsupporting glass, sometimes with glass fins and beams to help carry the load. Silicone is used to seal joints and give a flush, watertight finish.

As with brick, glazed structures must adhere to building regulations and may need planning permission - an architect and structural engineer will guide you through and supply the detailed calculations required regarding the loading and thermal efficiency.



# **JARGON BUSTER**

# Low-emissivity glass

Coated to allow heat and light through and retain the heat.

# Solar-control glass

Coated on the inside to reduce glare and block heat, reflecting the sun back outside.

# Toughened glass

Breaks into tiny pieces that won't cut you if it gets smashed.

# Laminated glass

Includes a plastic interlayer, so if it's broken, the fragments will be held in place.

# Self-cleaning glass

Specially coated to break down organic dirt and make the rain run off smoothly, taking the grime with it. It's useful for areas you can't reach easily to clean.

# Acoustic glass

Has an extra laminated layer to absorb sound.

# Smart or intelligent glass

Can be changed from clear to opaque at the flick of a switch.

# U value

A measure of heat loss in a wall, roof or floor - regardless of material - which shows how good this part of a building is at retaining heat. A low value would suggest it's very good at insulating.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE









# High life

The original house (above) was in such bad condition Julia decided to knock it down and build this spectacular house instead. It was designed with a covered deck and large windows to take advantage of its river setting, and was raised off the ground on stilts in case of flooding









# WHEN WE VISITED THE HOUSE THAT ORIGINALLY STOOD ON THIS SITE AND LOOKED OUT

nterior designer and TV presenter Julia Kendell, 46, recalls the amazing challenge and achievement of constructing a five-bedroom eco home on the banks of the river Thames in Berkshire.

'When we first visited the house that originally stood on this site and looked out over the river, we thought it was absolutely perfect for us. The three-bedroom 1920s wooden bungalow had been empty for two years, and had been owned by an elderly couple for the previous 30 years. I moved in in the May with my daughters and then-partner, and we found ourselves sharing our new home with several birds and a family of mice.

We'd always dreamed of building our own house, and it quickly became clear, after a *Swallows and Amazons*-style summer where I cooked on a Belling camping cooker, that not a lot could be done to the old building – it was falling apart. So we decided to knock it down and start again. We asked a local architect called Chris Tapp, who'd built himself an eco house, to help us design our dream home.

Our aim was to build an ecofriendly house, soft on the landscape but contemporary in style. The

site is on a flood plain and the original house was on stilts, so we had to raise the new property off the ground too, or we'd never have been able to insure it.

Instead of the usual foundations, which take a lot of concrete, we used a system where they drill down until they reach bedrock and screw in huge metal piles. It's called helical screw piling. In our case they had to go 15 metres down because of the flood plains.

Once the metal piles were in place, Chris used glue-laminated Douglas fir beams, which slot together on steel plates with nuts, brackets and bolts – like a giant Meccano set. To keep our carbon footprint down, we sourced as much as possible from local suppliers or from the UK, although we did go to China for the nuts and bolts because they were 20 times more expensive to buy in this country.

The house was based on a grid design with bays measuring 3.6 metres square, which is the standard size of panelling and length of timber. We wanted to cut down on wastage to conserve resources, as well as saving ourselves money and effort.

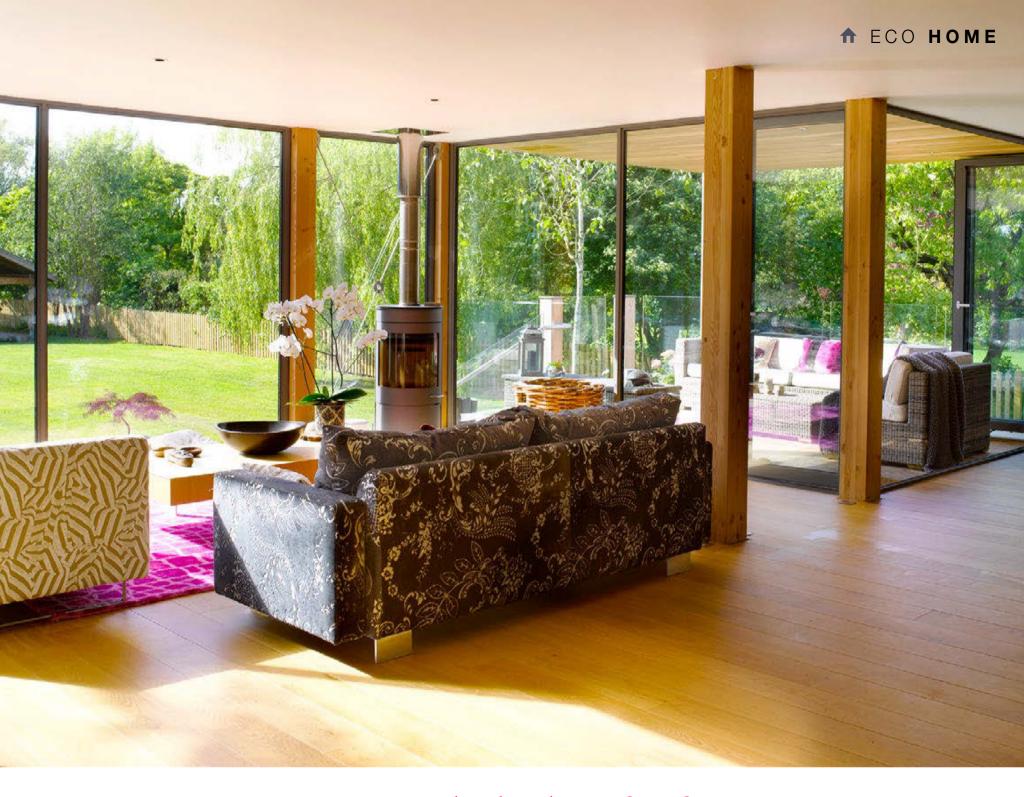
Planning permission for the building was granted within a few *Continued over next page* 

# Ground floor

'I love to mix different timber colours so it looks warm, homely and less contrived,' says Julia

# Exterior

Steps lead down to the fabulous garden with its huge expanse of lawn and the boathouse in the distance



over the river, we thought it was absolutely perfect for us,' says Julia





Create Your Dream Home 2015 from House Beautiful 33





# 'THE STRUCTURE AND ROOF TOOK just six weeks to slot together,' says Julia

months, and although we were allowed to add another storey, we were told we couldn't increase the footprint of the original house. We managed to get the outer framework up to the first floor before the river flooded and stopped work for a week.

As we're so close to the water, Chris designed a hydraulic lift system for our garage and gym. A float switch automatically senses water if there's a flood, and raises the entire floor of the garage by 1.5 metres. We used to joke that it was like *Thunderbirds* and all we needed was a palm tree to complete the look.

The external structure and roof took just six weeks to slot together, and the entire build took only nine months. We also had the advantage of no VAT, because we were starting from scratch.

We wanted our home to blend into the landscape, and with the exterior clad in western red cedar, it suits the surroundings perfectly. Inside we have a small vestibule area for outdoor shoes and an entrance hall that leads into a large open-plan layout, with beautiful views of the river, a boathouse and goslings and ducklings in the garden.

The central glass-balustraded stairs leading to

the first floor allow light to flood through the entire space. To one side lies the dining area, with clever wooden storage and display space built into the wall. We also fitted two sets of double doors leading to the large covered wooden deck outside, which overlooks the river but is sheltered by the overhang of the bedroom above.

For our open-plan kitchen, we chose German units because you can't beat their functionality, with Corian worktops and oak cabinetry. We also laid oak flooring throughout.

The house has four bedrooms, each with ensuite, and a fifth bedroom on the ground floor. And eco-wise, we have our own boreholes, so we can draw water from the aquifer. We installed a heat-recovery system, which draws the air out through vents in the ceiling and passes clean, fresh air back into the house. Our underfloor heating means we avoid hot spots from radiators, and because the building is airtight we don't lose any heat. We also have passive solar heating.

With its fabulous setting and view over the river, the house is now a wonderful retreat.'

# First floor

Julia had the ceilings clad in cedar to tie in with the woodland around the house. 'Cedar has a lovely, soft aroma – it's very calming to fall asleep to and gives the house a unique scent,' she says

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE

# UP FOR RENEWAL

Building ecofriendly products into your new home can cut fuel bills

# REDISCOVERING CONCRETE It's a controversial choice but now developments in the manufacture of concrete are making it more ecofriendly. Its production does use a lot of water and energy, but on the plus side it's almost entirely sourced from within the UK and the average delivery distance is just 35km. You can also specify 'responsibly sourced concrete' – visit concretecentre.com for details. The other benefit is that once poured it's a useful heat store so it can reduce energy use. Or choose a concrete screed on top of floor insulation, which gives the same look but is said to be more thermally efficient. 'Polished flowing screeds are laid down at a 50mm thickness over insulation on top of a concrete slab. Underfloor heating pipes are clipped down into the insulation,' explains Sean Campbell from Ecoscreed. Polished concrete flooring retains heat well and is perfect for a minimalist scheme



# SAVE EVERY DROP

Rainwater is a cost-effective and sustainable option for flushing loos, washing clothes and watering the garden, so consider investing in a rainwater-harvesting system. Direct-feed systems are easy to install and turn themselves on each time water is used. The disadvantage is that this uses a lot of power. Gravity-fed systems pump water into a header tank a couple of times a day, where it's then stored. They're cheaper to run, but it is more complicated. Whichever system you choose, installation will cost £3,000-£4,500. However, if you wanted to filter rainwater for drinking, the equipment and electricity required would push the cost much higher.

# Energy payback

Offset the cost of eco features by making money from them. There are two ways:

Feed-in Tariffs Customers who generate electricity from a renewable or low-carbon source, such as solar panels or wind turbines, can be paid for every kilowatt hour they produce and for any extra energy they export to the National Grid. They also save money on their energy bill.

Renewable Heat Incentive
Those who heat their homes using a renewable energy

system, such as air- or groundsource heat pumps (see right) or biomass boilers, can apply for a quarterly payment from the Government. Among new builds, only self-build houses qualify. Find out more about these and changes coming in spring 2015 at gov.uk.



# PUMP UP THE HEAT

In new-build eco homes, fuel bills tend to be low because it doesn't take much energy to heat a well-insulated house.

The challenge is finding ways to capture and disperse the warmth. That's why heat pumps, which provide electricity and hot water, are becoming a must-have feature. 'Heat pumps need a well-insulated building to work at their best,' says Caspar Speakman from Right Choice Renewables. 'There are two types – air source, which extract heat from the air through an external unit, and ground source, which absorb heat from the ground via a series of pipes in boreholes or trenches in the garden.'

What's the difference? According to Caspar, ground-source pumps are arguably more efficient but cost twice as much to install – around  $\mathfrak{L}20,000$  – because of the groundwork involved. They're better suited to properties with big gardens and plenty of land for the pipes. If you have a smaller plot, opt for an air-source pump.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE



ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO...

# BUILDING YOUR OWN HOME

Thanks to recent innovations, there's more than one way to create the perfect house

onstructing your own home exactly where and how you want was once a dream realised by only a determined few - those who were prepared to put the rest of their lives on hold, learn a whole new set of practical skills, and spend years dedicated to the project. However, self-build in the UK is undergoing a revolution and it's never been more accessible.

The Government has announced unprecedented support and encouragement for those who want create their own place to live, with a series of measures and financial incentives. These include freeing up land for potential

self-build and backing a major source of advice for would-be self-builders through The Self Build Portal (selfbuildportal. org.uk). It's advocating imaginative and pragmatic links between developers and individuals, as well as encouraging like-minded people to pull together to create community self-build projects, a move supported by *Grand Designs* presenter Kevin McCloud.

'We're entering a really fascinating time when groups of people take control over the quality of their environment,' he says. 'I've been dreaming about this for decades. I think we'll see growth in a completely new way.' It's becoming easier to make your dream home a reality



## $oldsymbol{1}$ what are the different kinds of self-build?

#### INDIVIDUAL-BUILT ONE-OFF HOME

A person literally constructs their own home, managing the entire process themself.

PROS

- Usually it's the cheapest option.
- You have total control over the project and get exactly what you want.

#### CONS

- This type of venture is risky and stressful, and you could make costly mistakes.
- You'll need to work directly with an architect or designer, so it requires self-confidence.
- It involves very hard work, long hours and strenuous physical labour.
- The process is complex and demands attention to detail to make sure the house meets all building standards and regulations.

# SUPPORTED COMMUNITY SELF-BUILD GROUP

A group of people come together to build a collection of homes – either for rent, part-ownership or full ownership – possibly with funding from social housing providers or grants. If you decide to go down this route, the first step is to approach the Community Self Build Agency (communityselfbuild agency.org.uk), which can offer advice and support, while the Government's new Community Right to Bid proposals may help you buy unused public land in England.

- It helps people who may not have funds to build their own home.
- You make a difference to your community.
- You learn valuable skills during the process, which could help with employment.
- Everybody needs to pull together.
- It may be difficult to reach a consensus on design, construction methods and timescales.
- The project can demand a lot of your time. For support and advice, see UK Cohousing Network (cohousing.org.uk); National CLT Network (communitylandtrusts.org.uk) for information on setting up a Community Land Trust to provide homes; Locality (locality.org.uk) for details of grants; Collective Custom Build (collectivecustombuild.org), which raises awareness about how people can build homes together.

## CONTRACTOR-BUILT ONE-OFF HOME

You employ a contractor to carry out the building work, possibly with the help of sub-contractors, whom you may have to find. PROS

- You get the home you want.
- It's cost-effective if the design is simple, you stick to your plans and it's well managed.
- You can help with labour to keep costs down.
- Expenditure can spiral original quotes may go up if the price of materials increases.
- You have to find a contractor you can trust.
- If you change your mind about the design, you must renegotiate with the contractor.
- You'll need to be self-disciplined about how 'hands-off' you wish to be.

# INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Like-minded individuals pool resources and employ an architect, builder and other tradesmen to build a group of houses.

- This is one of the most affordable routes, typically saving 40 per cent on plot costs and an extra 10 per cent on building costs.
- It's great for getting to know your neighbours.
- You have a large degree of flexibility over the design of your home.

## CONS

- It can take time to get a group together ideally you'll need 10-20 people for it to work.
- The enterprise will need managing and sometimes a consensus is difficult to reach.
- It could be hard to find a site everybody is happy with, and agreeing who gets which plot at what price could be a source of tension.
- You'll need to set 'design rules' for the site for example, house heights, materials and eco measures and this can be a huge challenge for inexperienced builders.

See The Self Build Portal (selfbuildportal.org. uk) for information on the Government's Custom Build Investment Fund, which runs until 31 March 2015; Confederation of Co-operative Housing (cch.coop) for advice on setting up a housing co-op; Collective Custom Build (collectivecustombuild.org), as before; National CLT Network (communitylandtrusts.org.uk), as before.



## **EXPERT VIEW**

Kevin McCloud, Grand Designs presenter

'We're entering a really fascinating time when groups of people take control over the quality of their environment. I've been dreaming about this for decades. I think we'll see growth in a completely new way'

# Smart ways to FIND A PLOT

**Register with sites** such as plotbrowser.com, plotfinder.net and buildstore.co.uk/findingland.

Use the 'need-a-plot' service at selfbuildportal.org.uk.

**Put out a message** on social media and advertise in local press and shops.

**Ask 'mobile companies',** such as taxi drivers and gardeners, if they'll carry an advert for you.

**Use Google Earth** to find untended gardens and buildings, then approach the owners to see if they wish to sell. 'It's usually easier to get planning approval next to existing houses,' says self-build expert David Snell.

**Employ a plot-finding company** or offer a finder's fee to your architect, and contact estate agents and property auctioneers such as countrywidepropertyauctions.co.uk.

Visit the National Self Build and Renovation Centre (nsbrc.co.uk), which has details of land for sale.

**Be imaginative,** says David Snell. 'If you see several gardens that are too small, but together could be big enough, consider assembling your own site.'

Continued over page





## **EXPERT ADVICE**

Jason Orme, spokesperson for the National Custom & Self Build Association

'The biggest mistake is usually scrimping on design. Each site demands an individual solution tailored to the specific needs of its owners, so a skilled designer is the key to a successful project. Too many self-builders think of design fees as an unnecessary expense, yet it is by far the most important element of the project'

# 2 custom-building: the new way to self-build

Custom-build homes are self-builds that involve a developer. They offer the chance to own an individual property, backed up by a professional company with architects and contractors already in place. Usually the purchaser can have input into the design and finish of the house.

'Custom-build developers offer a range of different options from "out of a brochure" designs to something truly individual,' says Jason Orme, spokesperson for the National Custom & Self Build Association.

This can be done either individually or as part of a group project. For instance, developer Igloo is working with the Homes & Communities Agency on a pilot scheme in Cornwall to provide more than 50 custombuild homes alongside new-builds, while in Newcastle, Charles Church is offering 39 'serviced plots' (another name for custombuilding) alongside conventional new-builds. Find more information at nacsba.org.uk. The new House Beautiful Homes collection is available as a custom-build; see the options, designs and find out more on p42.

## **DEVELOPER-BUILT ONE-OFF HOME**

You have a property built to your specifications - within certain design parameters - by a developer. **PROS** 

- You get the back-up of a professional developer and the input of property professionals, such as architects, but retain a degree of control over your own house.
- All the services gas, electricity, water, etc - will be installed on-site for you.
- You'll move into a ready-made community.
- You won't have to spend years searching for an individual plot.
- You may be able to arrange with the developer to finish the project yourself, saving money on the completed house while still getting exactly what you want. CONS
- It can be one of the more expensive self-build routes, as the developer will want to make a profit on the finished property.
- There are only about a dozen sites offering this option in the UK, so you will be limited geographically unless you find a plot yourself.

## **DEVELOPER-LED GROUP PROJECT**

This approach is similar to building an individual house with a developer, but is undertaken as a group project.

## **PROS**

- It's relatively risk-free.
- You'll be able to have a say in the design, within certain parameters.

## CONS

- There are very few developers offering this option in the UK at the moment.
- You'd need to find a group of like-minded individuals to work with and persuade a developer to take you on.
- If you're the most keen, you may end up being the driving force behind the project. For more information, see the House Beautiful Homes collection, p42; Home Builders Federation (hbf.co.uk), which represents the house building industry; Community Build (communitybuild.org.uk), which aims to bring together those who want to build their own homes as part of a group.

# 3 financing your build

## You have three main options:

**Use your savings** or arrange a loan from family or friends.

Sell your current house to raise the funds.

**Take out a self-build mortgage.** You'll still need a sizeable deposit; typically, you can borrow around 75 per cent of the land cost and 60 per cent of the build cost.

#### What's special about a self-build mortgage?

- The lender releases the loan in stages as the new house is completed. They usually coincide with purchase of the plot, foundations, wall-plate, house finished to weather-tight, first fix (all internal elements fitted, such as doors and skirting boards) and completion.
- Traditional self-build mortgages release the finance in arrears; that is, after each step is completed, but there are now 'accelerator' or 'advance' products that provide funds prior to each stage. Shop around and take advice from an independent mortgage broker before committing.
- Some lenders will only release a certain percentage typically up to 75 per cent before the project is completed, so you may need to set aside extra cash for contingencies.
- You'll need proof of income and outgoings in the same way as for a standard mortgage.
- Usually, the homeowner will be able to convert their self-build mortgage to a standard one when the build is complete, so check this with your lender.
- Fees and interest rates tend to be higher than rates for standard products. For more information, visit homebuilding.co.uk; read The House Builder's Bible by Mark Brinkley, (£20, Ovolo Books) and Building Your Own Home by David Snell (about £18, Ebury Press); search self-build websites for courses and seminars, exhibitions and roadshows aimed at self-builders; visit the National Self Build & Renovation Centre in Swindon (nsbrc.co.uk), where experts on designing, planning permission, building regulations and technical issues can help you.

# 4 managing your budget

Keeping control of your costs is vital to the success of any self-build project.

Have a contingency fund of between 10 and 20 per cent. The more challenging the site, the bigger this fund should be – so sites that are on a slope, for instance, will require you to set a little more cash aside.

Groundworks are always the most difficult part of the project to estimate, as no one truly knows what is under the site until digging commences. Always be prepared for this to cost more than you expect.

Changing your mind about specification always costs money. This is where planning in advance is vital, and working closely with your architect and other design professionals will save money in the long run.

Negotiating is key to cutting costs. It's essential to have an honest conversation with your builder to work out what they can get cheaper for you with a trade discount and what you can source yourself. Remember that although contractors will usually be able to buy materials at a discount, they will add their premium on top, so you need to work out which is the cheapest option.

Think carefully about the internal specification – does the kitchen really need to cost £25,000 when a similar design would cost £15,000? Invest your funds in ensuring a sound and thermally effective shell as this will save you money for years to come.

Set up secure and waterproof storage on site, so you can buy in bulk to save money.

#### As you're building a new property, you

should be eligible for a VAT refund, typically around £10,000, on the materials used. However, do remember that you will have to pay this upfront before you're able to reclaim it, and you must submit a claim within three months of completion. Keep good records of what you've spent.

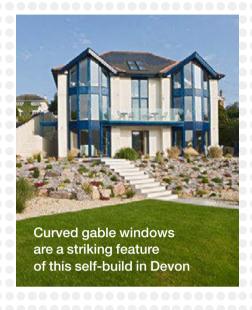
There are various online interactive guides that will help you estimate your costs - see selfbuildportal.org.uk.

You may also decide to employ a professional quantity surveyor or building estimator to work out your costs. Although this will ramp up your fees, the savings they could make for you may outweigh this in the long run. Talk to your architect about whether this would work for you. Find a quantity surveyor through the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (rics.org) and a building estimator through the Chartered Institute of Building (cbcschemes.org.uk).



# Designing your DREAM HOME

Self-build expert David Snell offers practical advice on creating the style and look you've always wanted



## Be innovative, but be careful

A highly individual or unconventional design might make a bold statement, but it won't necessarily appeal to a wide range of buyers in future.

Consider the local style – a design that fits in will also be looked on more favourably by the planners.

#### Keep things in proportion

Self-builders are often tempted to make their house as big as possible, but this can restrict the size of the garden and therefore its worth.

## Ensure costs relate to end value

It's crucial to be realistic about the potential value of the property. Never build in negative equity unless you know you won't be moving out.

#### Don't get carried away

Homeowners often love the idea of new innovations, equipment and materials, but what you consider 'must-haves' may not be as attractive to future potential buyers.

## Consider how you'll live in it

Unusual characteristics, such as having a kitchen upstairs or a front door at the back of the house, may not be practical in the long term, so think them through carefully.

## Allow space for the car

Most people expect houses to have at least one garage. As a garage door is often impressive, it's worth including one in the initial design.

Continued over page

'New buildings must adhere to a series of Codes, which cover insulation, air tightness and lots more in order to pass building regulations. In some counties, you may have to adhere to Code 4; in some it may be Code 5, so ensure your architect takes advice from your local council'

# 5 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Should you employ a professional or do it yourself? The more hands-on you are with your self-build project, the more money you'll save, but you'll need to find the balance between keeping costs down and saving your sanity. These are your four main options:

Build the house yourself, enlisting your partner and other family members, and hiring in specialist trades as you need them. This is extremely arduous physically, and you may lack the necessary skills and experience to complete the house to professional standards. This is really only for those who are prepared to devote their life to the project, as it will be very time-consuming.

Run the site yourself, so you're responsible for hiring all the various tradesmen, from groundworkers to plumbers. This also involves sourcing and ordering the materials, coordinating deliveries, organising the flow of labour, arranging building regulations inspections and other necessary checks. It gives you total control, but requires a lot of time and effort – and it's difficult to do this while holding down a full-time job.

Use a main contractor - a building company that runs the site for you and organises all the different elements. The drawback of this is that you'll pay for the service and will be beholden, in some degree, to the schedule of the contractor. Delays can end up causing arguments. If you decide to go down this route, you must be sure you can get along well with the person you're working with. It's a good option if you have a busy job or live a long way from the site and have no contacts in terms of sub-contractors. However, communication is key, and you'll have to agree regular contact, visits and phone calls. Ask your architect to also act as project manager. Not all architects offer this level of service, and it can be very expensive. But if you choose it, you'll be assured that the

final build meets the right standards.

# 6 BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE HOME

Tom Gascoyne, creative director of Orme architects in Somerset, is a director at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). He explains how it's possible to build a warm, ecofriendly home without compromising on the design.

There are three main considerations – orientation, insulation and controlled ventilation. Establishing the correct orientation is vital to give your home natural light where it most needs and wants it. Advances in glazing systems mean that you can now have large expanses of triple or even quadruple-glazed windows that are incredibly ecofriendly, allowing light and heat into your home with a thermal efficiency that's close to that of an insulated wall.

Polished concrete flooring is a really attractive and robust option that has fantastic thermal qualities, absorbing naturally occurring heat during the day and releasing it at night.

Achieving the most energy efficiency means getting rid of the air leaks and cold spots. And advances in insulation and glazing systems mean there's no need to compromise on aesthetics.

# 7 is it worth employing an architect?

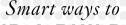
You can involve an architect as little or as much as you like, but at the very least you'll need one to draw up your plans. Ideally you'd involve them throughout the process as they also have the knowledge and professional expertise to consult with planning officers and building regulations officials to ensure your plans have the best chance of being approved.

Architect Andy Ramus of AR Design Studio, Winchester, explains, 'An architect can help with the complexities of the planning process, while a good design can add value to a house by helping you get the plan and layout right and making the best use of light. It can seem expensive but it won't feel like that when planning permission goes smoothly and your home's value increases.'

You can find an architect by asking friends and family who have had work done.

Alternatively, contact the Royal Institute of British Architects (architecture.com) for local firms who have the relevant experience for your project, or the Architects' Registration Board (architects-register.org.uk). If you just use an architect for your plans, you'll pay a one-off fee, which will depend very much on the reputation of the architect and the work involved. You can also employ an architect at an agreed percentage of the build cost (typically between eight and 12 per cent), payable in stages, to project manage your entire build. In this case, they'll liaise with contractors and suppliers and be responsible for the day-to-day running of the project.

'Before you choose an architect, check out their past projects, and ensure it's someone you can get on with - you'll be dealing with them for two to three years,' adds Andy.



## **FIND A BUILDER**

Ask your architect, but be sure to do your own checks on their work, inspect properties they have built and speak to previous customers. Or if you see building going on locally that you like, take note of the builder's name, or approach them directly while they're working.

**Seek out recommendations** and be prepared to wait for someone good. They'll probably be booked up, so factor this into your planning.

Look for members of trade associations. Try TrustMark (trustmark.org.uk), an umbrella organisation for 30 schemes (including the Federation of Master Builders and electrical trade body NICEIC). Check they're insured and have a complaints procedure.

Try the new Find A Self Build contractor scheme from the Federation of Master Builders (fmb.org.uk/selfbuildcontractor), which aims to link self-builders with more than 1,500 local contractors who have experience of self-build projects. Every builder must have satisfied background checks and agreed to a rigorous code of practice.

# BRITISH PROUD



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Welcome to the launch of a new concept in home design and construction

Stylish, spacious, modern and thoughtfully designed, House Beautiful Homes is a premier collection of custom-built homes manufactured off-site using state-of-the-art modular construction techniques. Reflecting the changing patterns of family life, the House Beautiful Homes designs include a spacious one-storey starter/retirement home, a three-bedroom family home, a multigenerational home with three separate living areas, and a luxury family version complete with stunning vaulted ceiling, glass walkway and a fifth bedroom option. House Beautiful Homes are designed and will be built to reflect the same style, elegance and practicality that is synonymous with the House Beautiful brand. These homes will be lived in and loved,' says Editor Julia Goodwin.





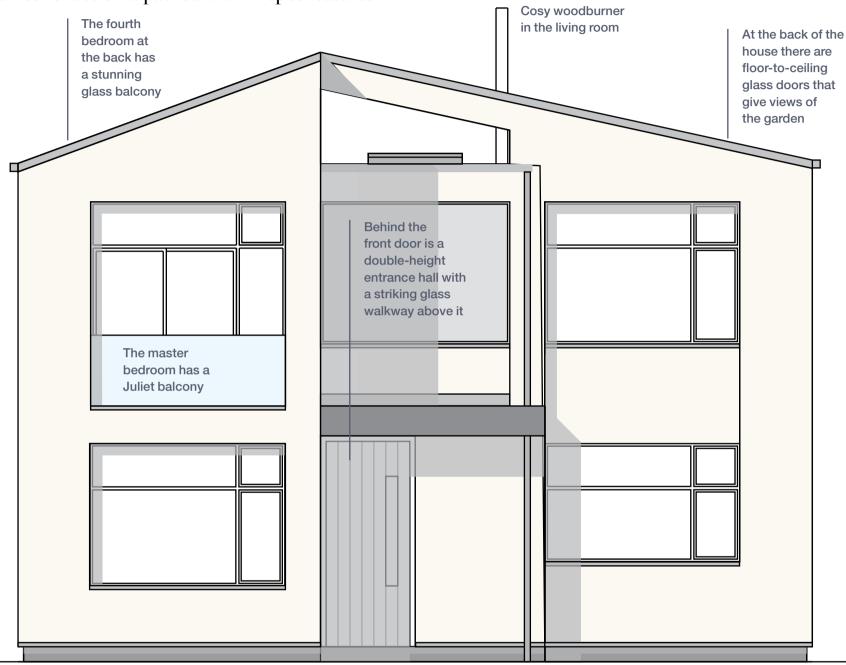
# Quality living

in the House Beautiful Homes collection have a sleek, contemporary exterior, glass atrium-effect roof, and large windows front and back to flood the inside space with light. Open-plan living areas and storage are designed for the way we want to live. The Mulberry (pictured) is the top-of-the-range, four/five bedroom luxury family home. Find out more about it overleaf

> House Beautiful HOMES Continued over page

# The MULBERRY

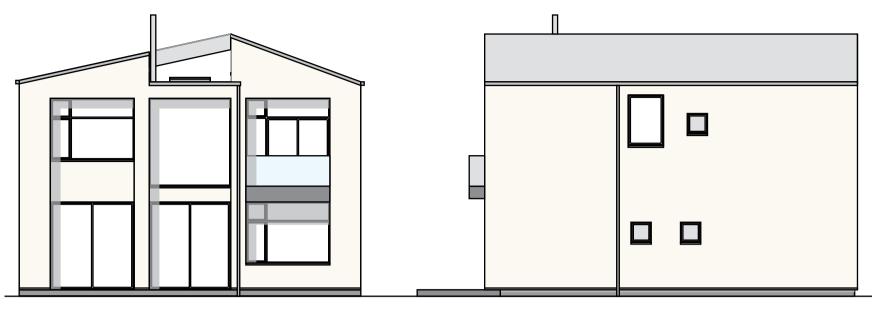
A luxury family home with a flexible layout to meet all your needs, this design from the House Beautiful Homes collection is packed with hi-spec features



## ACHIEVING THE ULTIMATE

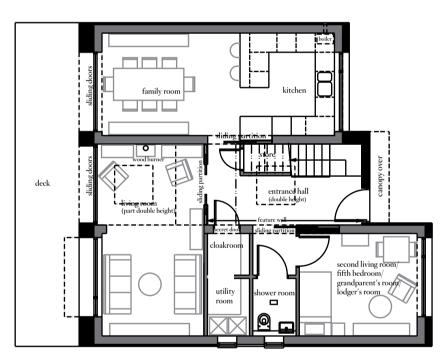
Perhaps your family is expanding or you're running a business from home – or maybe you just want the ultimate hi-spec house? The Mulberry is the largest of all the homes in the collection, with four bedrooms and a home office/play area upstairs, plus a kitchen/family room and two separate living areas downstairs. The kitchen and the living room next to it both have views of the garden through floor-to-ceiling glass doors, and at the heart of the home is an atrium-effect skylight that creates an amazing feeling of space. There are two shower rooms, one family bathroom, one WC, a utility room and bespoke storage to ensure there is a place for everything.

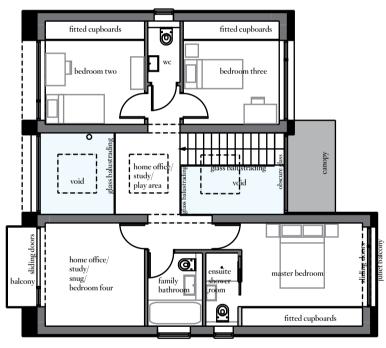




LOOKING TO THE GARDEN FROM THE SIDE

## MULBERRY FLOORPLAN





GROUND FLOOR FIRST FLOOR

## **MULBERRY**

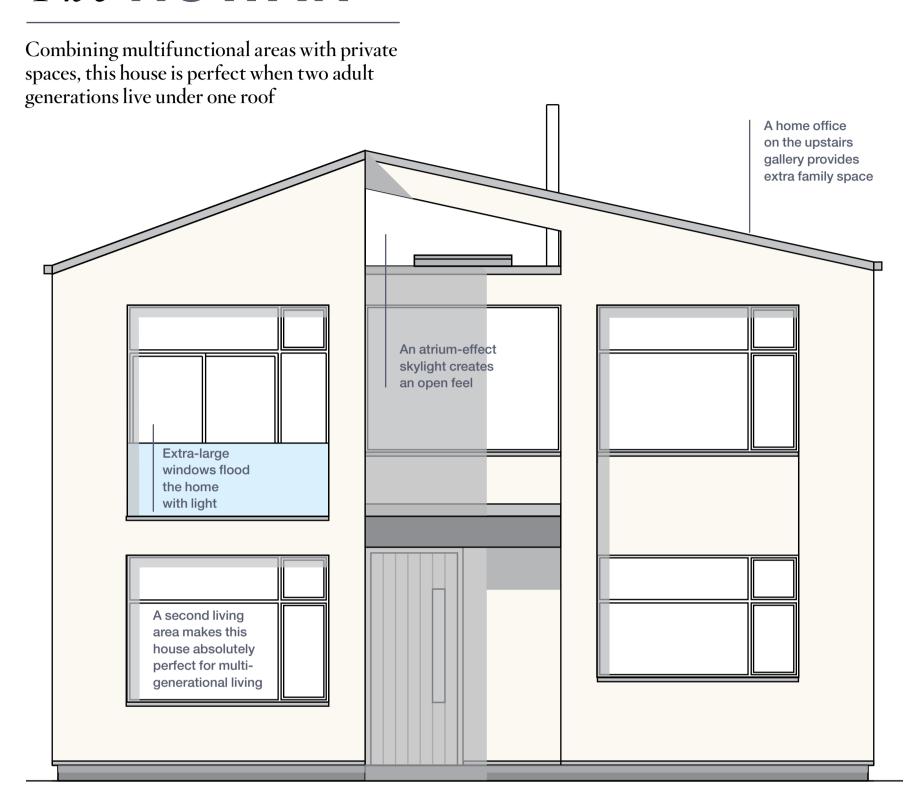
TOTAL AREA	135m²/1,453ft²
GROUND FLOOR	
Kitchen/dining/family room	23m²
Living/garden room	20m²
Second living room/bedroom	12m <sup>2</sup>
FIRST FLOOR	
Master bedroom	13m <sup>2</sup>
Bedroom two	10m²
Bedroom three	10m²
Bedroom four	10m <sup>2</sup>

WITH ITS VAULTED OPENPLAN LIVING AREA AND STUNNING
INTERIOR WALKWAYS, THE MULBERRY
HAS THE BEST OF EVERYTHING.
IT'S A delightful, practical and
adaptable FAMILY HOME.'

JULIA GOODWIN, HOUSE BEAUTIFUL EDITOR



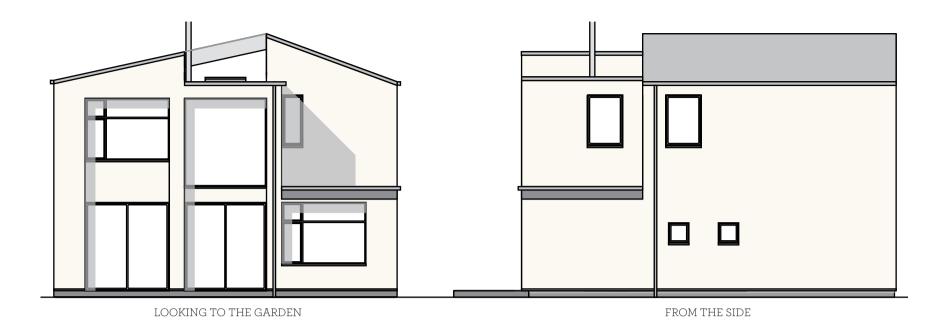
# The ROWAN



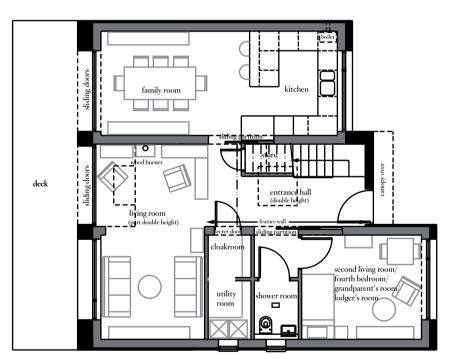
## LIVING SIDE BY SIDE

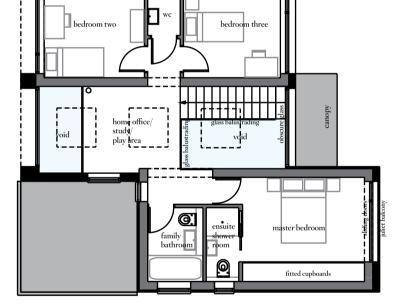
The changing shape of family life – boomerang kids, living with elderly parents or taking in lodgers – means modern homes have to work hard. The Rowan design from the House Beautiful Homes collection has the ideal layout to accommodate multi-generational living. It has three separate living areas downstairs, with the second living room, complete with ensuite shower room, perfect for adult children who have come home, or their grandparents. Space-enhancing features, such as a double-height hall, ensure no one will feel cramped, and sliding partition walls keep things private.





## ROWAN FLOORPLAN





GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

## **ROWAN**

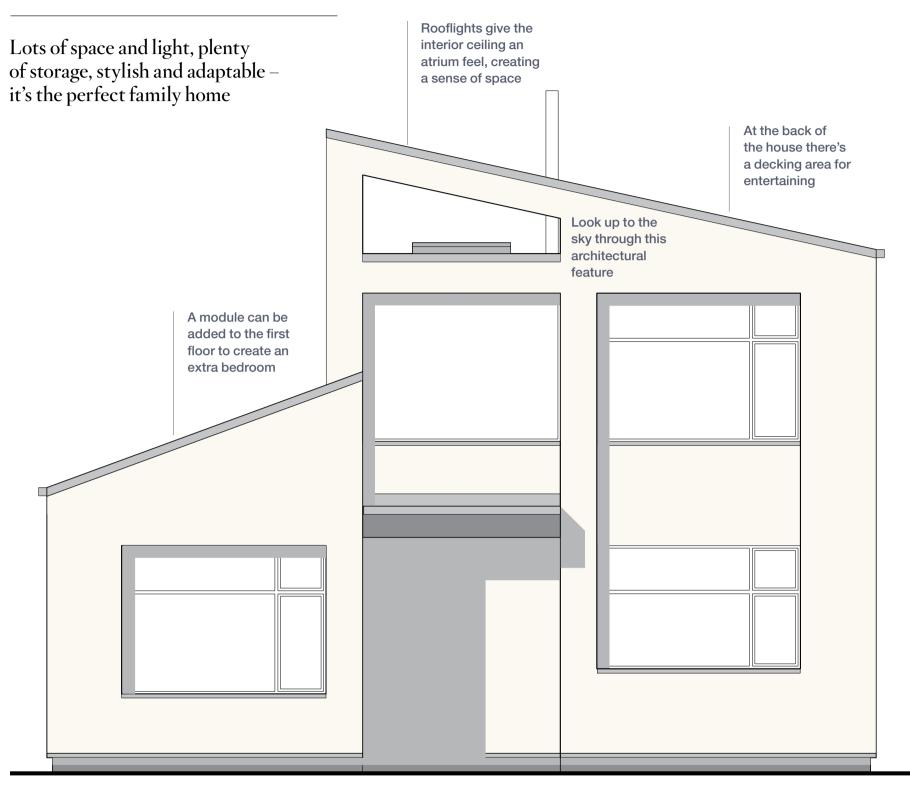
TOTAL AREA	123.4m <sup>2</sup> /1,328ft
GROUND FLOOR	
Kitchen/dining/family room	23m²
Living room	20m²
Second living room/bedroom	n four 12m²
FIRST FLOOR	
Master bedroom	13m²
Bedroom two	10m²
Redroom three	10m²

MORE PEOPLE ARE
SHARING THEIR HOMES WITH ADULT
CHILDREN OR ELDERLY RELATIVES AND
THE ROWAN OFFERS THE ULTIMATE
IN easy access and flexibility - LIGHT,
OPEN-PLAN SPACES TO SHARE AND
PRIVACY WHEN REQUIRED.'

JULIA GOODWIN, HOUSE BEAUTIFUL EDITOR

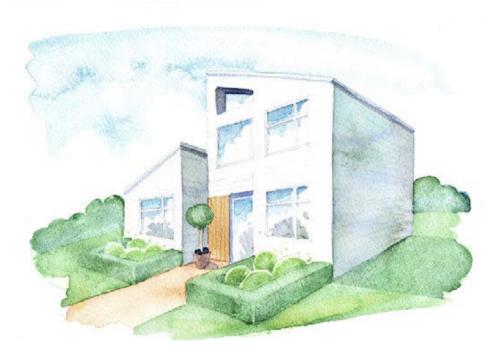


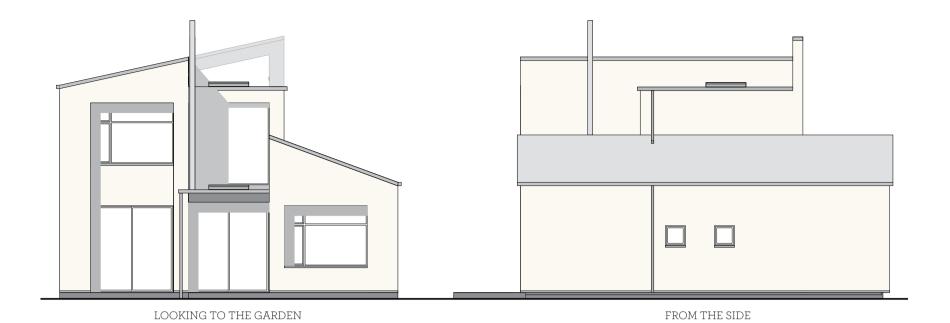
# The MAPLE



## MOVING ON UP

You've outgrown your starter home and need space for children and all the toys, extra furniture and paraphernalia that are part of the package. The three-bedroom Maple from the House Beautiful Homes collection more than fits the bill. The stunning double-height entrance hall has a large cupboard perfect for leaving coats and muddy wellies at the door, and there's a spacious kitchen/diner/family room, where children can play or do their homework while you cook. Folding glass doors lead out onto the garden from both the kitchen and the living room, and the house has a utility room, family bathroom and separate WC. And when space becomes tight again, the house can easily be extended (see above).





## MAPLE FLOORPLAN





GROUND FLOOR FIRST FLOOR

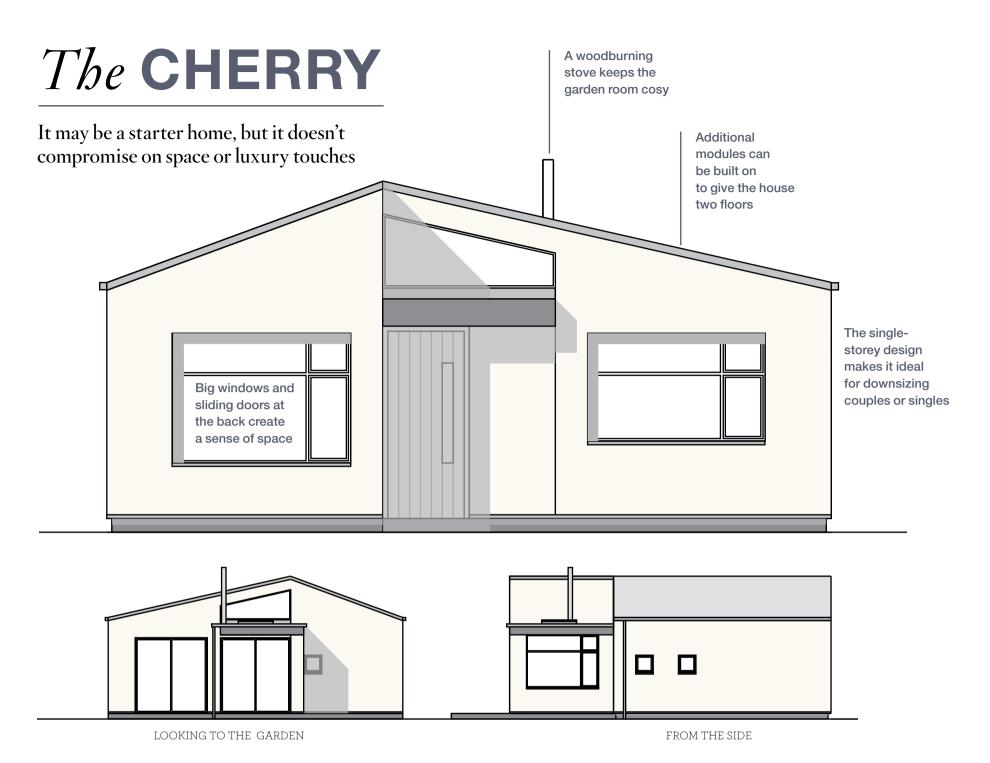
## **MAPLE**

TOTAL AREA 96.1m<sup>2</sup>/1,034ft<sup>2</sup> GROUND FLOOR Kitchen/dining/family room  $23m^2$ 20m<sup>2</sup> Living room Master bedroom  $12m^2$ FIRST FLOOR Bedroom two 10m<sup>2</sup> Bedroom three  $10m^2$ 

FITTED CUPBOARDS, A LARGE STORE AND A UTILITY ROOM provide all the storage A GROWING FAMILY REQUIRES - AND THERE'S LOTS OF SPACE FOR CHILDREN TO PLAY AND FAMILIES TO BE TOGETHER.' HouseBeautiful HOMES

JULIA GOODWIN, HOUSE BEAUTIFUL EDITOR

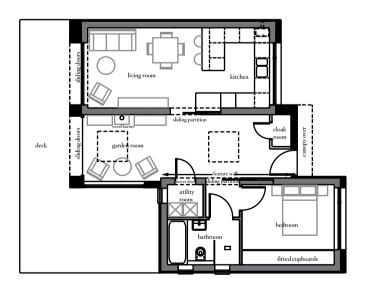
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It's that exciting time when you're ready to step onto the first rung of the property ladder. Most first-time buyers will opt for a flat for pricing reasons, but with the Cherry design you could have a one-bedroom house. And it's no ordinary one-bedroom house - it has an open-plan kitchen/dining/ living room, a light-filled garden room with woodburning stove, a useful utility area and a cloakroom. The Cherry is also ideal if you're downsizing and looking to move into a spacious, easy-to-care-for, modern home with enough storage for those things you just can't bear to throw away.

## CHERRY FLOORPLAN



## **CHERRY**

TOTAL AREA	69.7m <sup>2</sup> /750ft <sup>2</sup>
Living/kitchen/dining room	23m²
Garden room/snug	21m²
Bedroom	12m²

# Stylish FINISHES

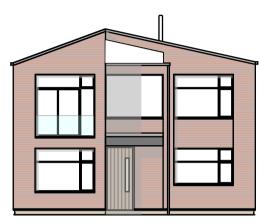
It's not just the interiors that are flexible — House Beautiful Homes are available in a wide selection of exterior finishes, from white render and weatherboarding to rough stone and brickwork. Here's just a small selection you can choose from



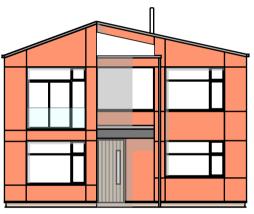
WHITE RENDER



RECONSTITUTED ROUGH STONE



RED BRICKWORK



ROCK FIBRE BOARD PLAIN



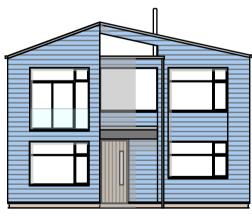
ROCK FIBRE BOARD WOOD PATTERN



ZINC CLADDING



BLACK STAINED VERTICAL TIMBER BOARDING



BLUE WEATHERBOARDING



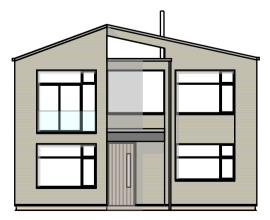
COPPER CLADDING



OFF-WHITE WEATHERBOARDING

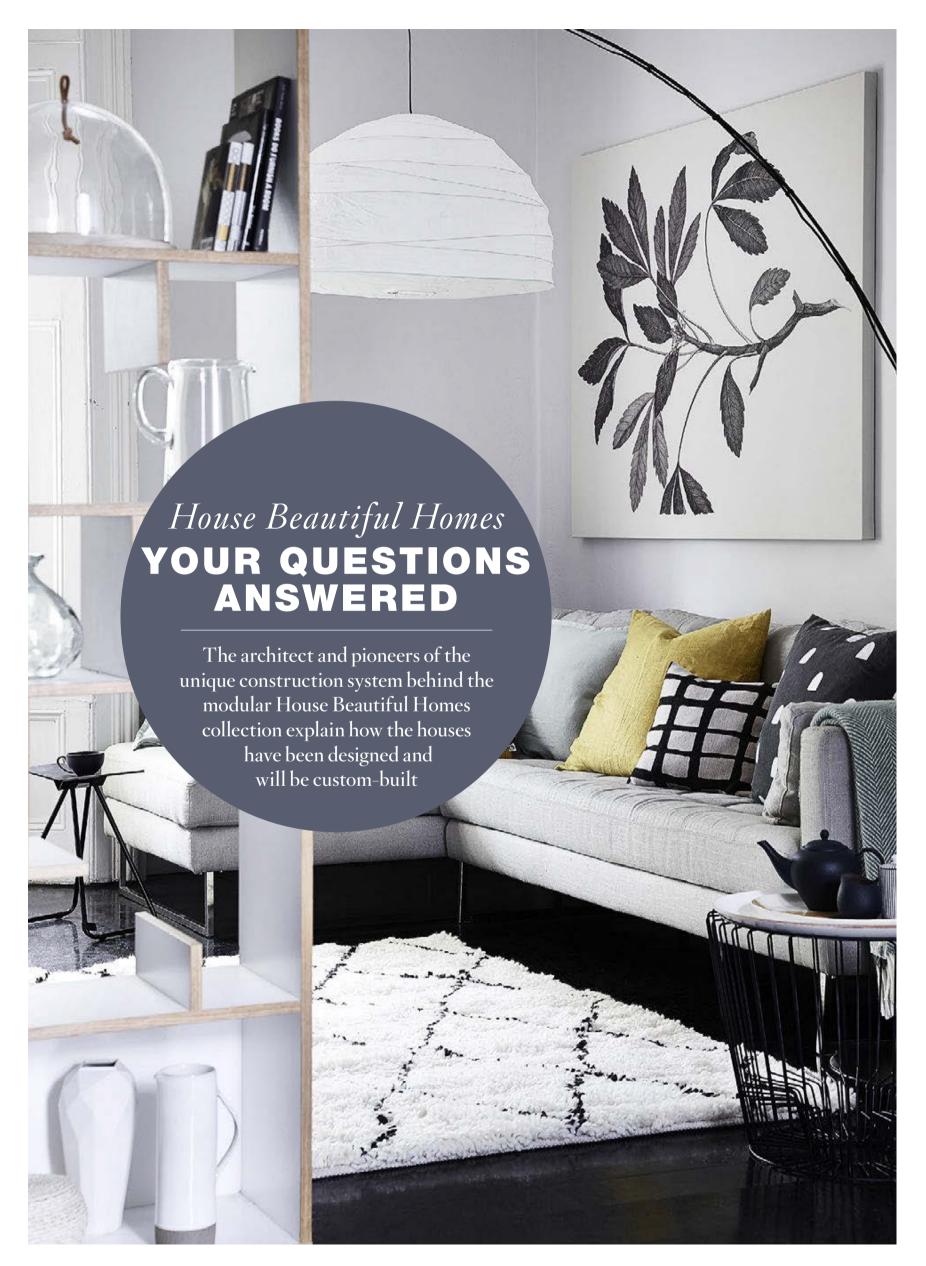


VERTICAL TIMBER CLADDING



YELLOW BRICKWORK





# Ask THE EXPERTS



ARCHITECT
Gareth Bridge
Founder and Director of
South Bank Architects

Gareth has been involved in a wide range of design projects, both residential and commercial



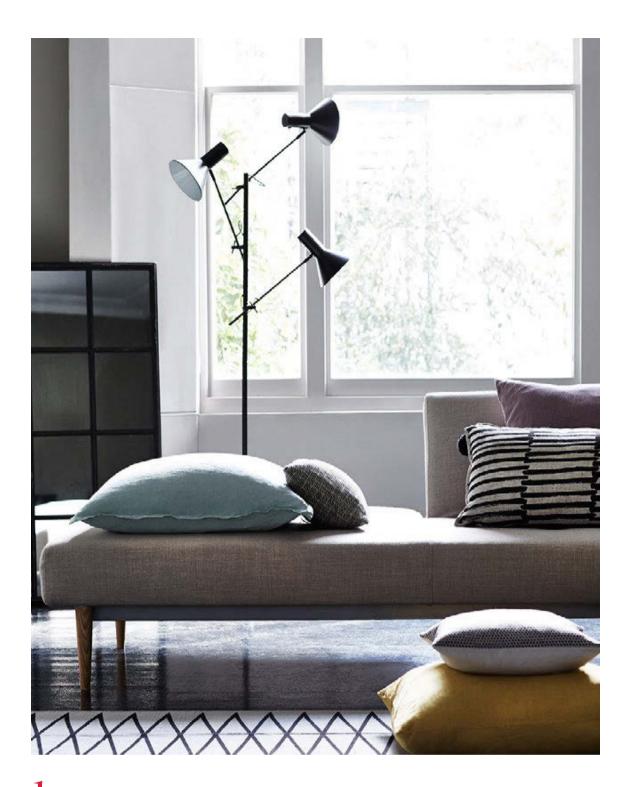
CONSTRUCTION
Steven Barrett
Chief Executive
of Futureform

Steven is a pioneer in the development of innovative off-site building systems



OPERATIONS
Peter Godwin
Head of Systems & Quality
Assurance at Futureform

Peter has more than 30 years' experience in operating, technology and procurement systems



## I inspired by you

Tell us where the inspiration for House Beautiful Homes came from?
Gareth Bridge, founder and director of South Bank Architects, says: Our starting point was a discussion with House Beautiful. It's a strong brand that editor Julia Goodwin and her team were keen to turn into a house form. The homes had to represent what the readership likes in a house.

We developed four separate options that reflect four quite specific types of people who could be the House Beautiful reader. We wanted to create a range of homes in which you could begin with a starter home and keep adding until you have a luxury one. That's the beauty of the modular system we use.

We've also designed the houses so they can be extended without adding a module, but with a conventional extension into the garden and loft instead. The designs are flexible, depending on what you want. The larger houses have a spare room downstairs, which could be a granny bedroom, a teenage study or even rented out to a lodger. The room is in a self-contained part of the house and has its own shower room to give privacy and flexibility. In the large luxury and multigenerational houses, we've also used the first-floor landing space to create almost another room that can be used as a play area, a study or somewhere to practise your hobbies. The two smaller houses were designed using the same principles, scaled down but without compromising space.

## Why are the houses so special?

GB: The key thing is that every design has the same spacious feel, with big rooms, lots of storage and lots of glass. With all of them, we worked as though we were building a one-off house in order to give the owners something that will make them feel as though they're in a designer house that has the wow factor. Continued over page

# The generous use of glass creates an amazing effect

GB: Yes, but it's a practical amount. You don't want too much glass because of overheating in the summer or not enough warmth in the winter. That's one of the reasons we put in a series of rooflights to create the effect of one big skylight rather than an all-encompassing atrium in the entrance hall—it would have been too much and also difficult from a construction point of view. In the luxury and multi-generational houses, we've included a window in the first-floor ensuite, and all of the houses have a window over the front door to bring in light, but it has obscure glass to protect privacy.

We design windows to get the maximum amount of light without overheating or glare, and clients will need to bear in mind the orientation of the house they are buying or building. But the good thing is that we've built shading into the design. For example, the deep reveals on the windows at the back of the houses aren't there just to give the buildings character, they also provide shading in the summer.

# Tell us more about the rooflights in the entrance hall of the bigger houses

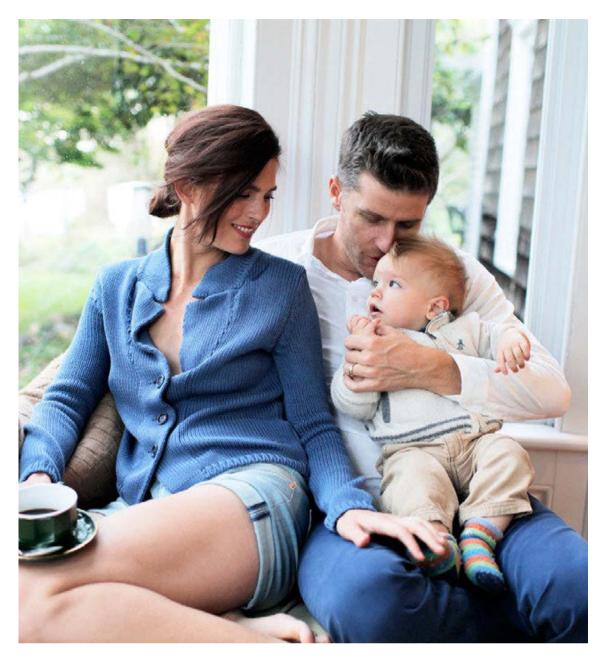
**GB:** There are three rooflights in a row, so when you look up you can see the sky. These open, so that in the summer you can ventilate the house – the main rooms open on to this central area.

# All of the houses have a very open-plan feel – was that deliberate?

GB: The houses are built using a state-of-theart modular construction system. When you put the modules together you end up with a series of rooms. So to create a friendly space, we put two lots of boxes either side of a gap. Then we filled in the gap with a large entrance hall that opens onto a wing either side, which provides a great feeling of space within. It's a very dynamic interior. Then we have sliding doors and panels, which allow various rooms to be sectioned off. Although we wanted a sense of space with open-plan living, we also felt that families need and want privacy. In the smaller homes, though, the panel between the hall and living room could be left out to create more of a sense of space as you come in.

# Highlight the practical features for us, such as storage

GB: We've built in a significant amount of storage to make the houses practical for real families to live in. With utility rooms, understair stores and airing cupboards, we've tried to make the most of all the ancillary spaces so they can be used effectively. In each room we've also created space for cupboards, desks and storage units.



## What about the interior?

**GB:** The interior decor will be up to the client. However, we have suggested things, such as having a feature wall in the entrance hall to make an impact as you come in, and incorporating the door of the utility room as part of the wall, like a secret door.

# The actual modules that make up the houses are constructed in a factory, how much of the interior finish is done there too?

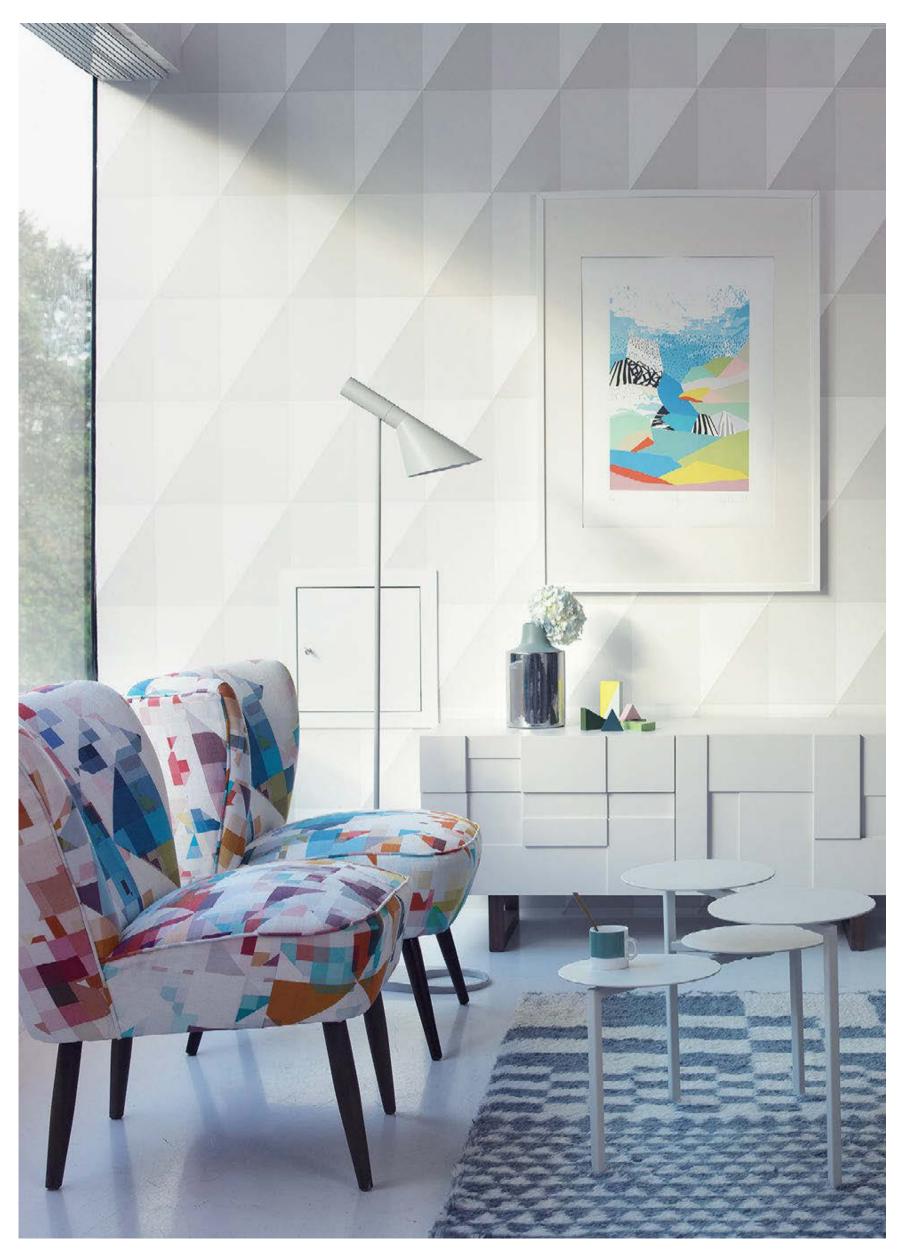
# Peter Godwin, Head of Systems & Quality Assurance at Futureform, says:

Once agreed with the customer, most of the interior work can be done in the factory too. On other projects I've overseen, the installation of the kitchen and bathrooms, along with papering and painting, have been done in the factory. Plumbing and electrics have to be agreed on at day one - so where you want light fittings and Wi-Fi points, for instance, has to be decided and can't be changed once the modules are under construction because of the access points we have to include. Basically, within the laws of physics, we can pretty much design, manufacture, construct and decorate to a client's request. Doing the interior in the factory also means the actual build is quick and very efficient. Continued over next page



YOU SHOULD BE ABLE
TO BUY A BRILLIANTQUALITY HOME IN THE
SAME WAY YOU BUY A
CAR. IT WILL COME
OFF THE SHELF,
CERTIFIED AND
APPROVED, OF A HIGH
STANDARD AND WITH
A range of options
YOU CAN CHOOSE.'

GEORGE CLARKE, ARCHITECT AND TV PRESENTER



## 2 BUILDING THE HOUSES

## Where will the land come from? House Beautiful Editor Julia Goodwin

says: There will be a variety of ways to source the land to build on. If someone has found an individual plot already, they could contact us and we would be able to arrange a house for that individual. Also, if a group of people, such as friends or relatives, found a plot of land that could hold several houses, we would be able to work with them to create the homes of their choice. And there will be a system where developers and builders who already own land could decide to build our homes on it – they would then sell them off-plan to interested individuals. This is likely to be smaller, independent developers and builders.

# How does this reflect the Government's plans to promote self-build?

JG: Our houses take the risk out of self-building and also mean that House Beautiful readers, or anyone else, can have a bespoke house build where and as they would like it.

GB: We're aware of the increasing desire for self-build, but it can still be quite difficult to achieve, so we're keen to make the process easier. Self-build can be a fraught experience for many people and the cost is a big factor in this. With House Beautiful Homes custombuilt houses, you have a fixed price, so you know how much things are going to cost.

## And what type of plot is suitable? Steven Barrett, Chief Executive of

Futureform, says: We can look at any plot as long as there are no obvious specific building restraints, such as planning permission issues or local conditions on certain kinds of homes. These homes can be put up on any kind of site, even a sloping one as long as a level platform is created for it to sit on.

# Are there issues to be aware of with obtaining planning permission?

**PG:** Only the usual – for instance, if your plot is in a conservation area, your house may have to fit in with the surroundings.

## What about building regulations?

**PG:** These houses are governed by building regulations just as with any other house.



# How do Futureform modular houses differ from other 'off-the-shelf' homes?

PG: For a start, they have a steel frame; others tend to be flatpack. Also, our houses are cheaper and quicker to erect than a typical non-standard home. We keep costs under control because we don't waste materials. This is because we manufacture everything ourselves in our own factory. The modular construction system also outperforms conventional construction in virtually every aspect, including air-tightness, thermal performance and durability. It requires less maintenance too.

One of the other key things that marks us out is that there are no major design constraints. We can vary the shape and angle of the walls and roofs, for example, and the modules we produce can be made to any size or shape that's transportable.

## How are the modules transported?

**PG:** On the back of a lorry, and a Futureform house can be transported without escort. The maximum size of a module is actually restricted to what is allowed on the roads,



'IT'S ALL ABOUT
OFFERING GREATER
CHOICE IN THE
HOUSING MARKET.
CUSTOM BUILD IS A
REALLY INTERESTING
ROUTE AS IT ALLOWS
THE CLIENT TO
choose the look,
STYLE AND INTERNAL
LAYOUT. IT HAS TO BE
THE WAY FORWARD.'
KEVIN MCCLOUD,

KEVIN MCCLOUD, TV PRESENTER









The houses are built in a factory and can be erected on site within 24 hours

which is approximately 15m x 4.2m. However, transport restrictions do vary up and down the country. We'll normally speak to our clients about this, and then the police, to be sure that there are no problems.

# So all of the elements of the house are put together before it's transported to the building site?

PG: Yes. We build off-site in our factory - we have assembly facilities on the south coast, near Southampton. The modules are lined and insulated, plumbing and electrical installations are completed, and internal and external fixtures, such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors, are fitted. Decorations and finishings are completed too. This is all done before the modules are delivered.

# The modules are insulated, so the houses must be ecofriendly

**PG:** We started 10 years ago, with ecospecifications and requirements in mind. Futureform homes offer a low carbon footprint, low material waste, high thermal performance and they meet all the current environmental and sustainability requirements.

# Talk us through the process for building the house on site

PG: The first thing is for the site to be prepared. This assumes that planning permission has been granted. The groundwork is much like that carried out for a standard house. A foundation will be dug and a base created. How deep the foundation is and what it is made of will depend on the height of the finished house and local conditions. Also, the services – gas, electricity, sewage and water – have to be brought in and connected by the team.

Once the groundwork has been completed, the on-site erection can take place. The modules will have been made and the fit-out will have been underway in the factory, and the complete, weatherproof and factory-fitted house will arrive at the prepared plot on the back of a truck, together with a crane for lifting everything into place.

All the modules are fixed together using 'plates' that slide into each other. This is usually done quickly. For example, a six-module house can easily be erected in one day. The final stage of cladding the exterior to the client's requirements can then take place. Amazingly, as a modular building system, all of the houses can be taken down and used again. If the client finds a new plot, their house can be moved! A Futureform team will usually do the installation, but we do have arrangements with steel erection companies around the country. Basically, as long as the team has been trained in our erection methods, they can put the house up.



# 3 back to basics

# Besides steel, what are these modular houses made from?

PG: The modules are built with a frame made from recycled steel that comes from one of our partner companies in the Midlands, and all the joists are made from pressure-treated timber. The walls have a moisture-resistant lining, but the internal finish is industry standard plasterboard—the same board that you would find in a traditional house.

## How exactly are the houses insulated?

PG: We use extra layers of board and insulation to achieve the highest standard of thermal performance. And we could quite easily put in extra insulation if the client wanted it. It would be down to the project. We use all different types of insulation. Normally it's rockwool, but we've also used lambswool, which is thought to be more ecofriendly. If you imagine a wall like a sandwich, the layers are: internal finish, plasterboard fitted to the steel, vapour seal material, then insulation, then the exterior, which will be finished with cladding.

## What types of cladding can be used?

**PG:** Any cladding can be put up - you choose! You could have render, brick, stone, zinc, copper, weatherboard. (See page 51 for a selection.)

## So the houses are very bespoke

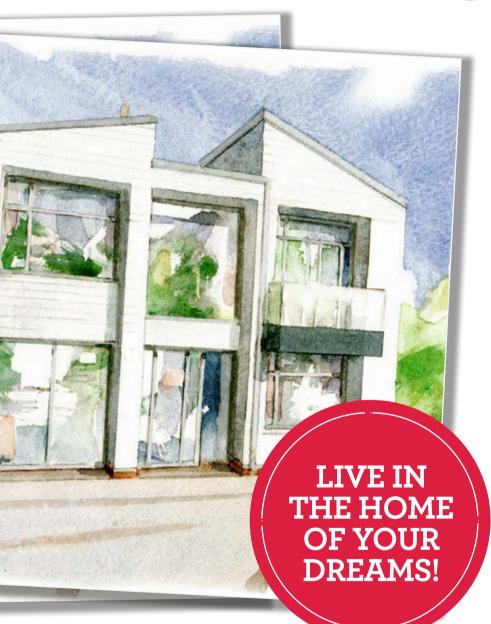
GB: Yes. The only fixed elements are the modules. The shape of the windows and the rooflights come as standard, but we're offering a range of features to choose from – such as the sliding internal doors – which also gives the houses flexibility.

## What else makes the houses attractive?

**GB:** Attention to detail. We've included a little 'triangle' above the front door of each house, which not only looks stylish but also brings in light. And we've made the pitches on the roof slightly different for each side. This stops the houses from looking like boxes and gives them standout style.

Find out more about how to afford a house like ours on page 80. Turn over for how to buy a House Beautiful home

# HOW TO BUYA HOUSE BEAUTIFUL HOME





## Dear Reader

Designed with you in mind, the four houses in our collection of bespoke homes reflect the same elegance, style and practicality that is the essence

of House Beautiful.

If you're interested in buying one, visit housebeautiful.co.uk, where you'll find lots more information and be able to register your details. As well as buying from one of our developers, you can also purchase direct from the manufacturer and custom-build from scratch.

If you need to talk to our team to find out more, simply email or ring the number below. We look forward to hearing from you!





Julia Goodwin, Editor Follow me on twitter @JuliaHouseBEd

To find out more about our premier collection of stylish modular custom-built homes:





Visit housebeautiful.co.uk
Email homes@housebeautiful.co.uk
Phone 020 3535 9158 to talk to the team





## Exterior

Huge expanses of glass and a sheltered patio allow the family to enjoy the outstanding views surrounding the house. The stairs leading to the basement are hidden behind a wall clad in cedar wood and beds packed with flowers and shrubs





fter living in a series of flats and traditional cottages, Claire and Ian Shann dreamed of building their own home from scratch, designed exactly the way they wanted it in a beautiful location. They found the perfect plot of land – just over an acre near High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, with stunning views over the Chilterns – and obtained planning permission to build a house there. However, these carefully laid plans began to unravel when they discovered that the lowest estimate for the build would take them £300,000 over their budget. 'I'll never forget that day,' says Claire. 'I thought, "We're not going to be able to do this".'

But, the couple weren't easily deterred. Claire had read an article about Huf houses, the German prefabricated buildings designed to a formula, made from glass, wood and concrete. They are delivered and constructed in sections, then bolted together on site – 'just like a child's building block,' says Claire – and the cost tends to be lower than most other new builds. The only drawback is that the company doesn't prepare the groundworks. But for Claire and Ian, it meant they could achieve their goal within budget.

'We went to meet the Huf Haus sales team in Surrey and they came to see the plot. Then we were assigned an architect who

discussed what we wanted and drew up the plans. Inside, the houses are all different as they're tailored to your needs,' Claire explains.

She and Ian then travelled to the factory in Germany where they spent two days making hundreds of decisions. 'At one point, Ian popped out to get a coffee and by the time he got back, I'd chosen the wooden flooring,' says Claire. 'Everything was easy; the only battle we had was over the front door. Huf wanted us to have their signature red wooden door, but I asked for white and glass. I won.'

The Shanns then appointed two contractors, Danny Galvin to prepare the groundworks, and Andy Sturgeon to landscape the garden. Having chosen a spot with stunning views, the couple wanted a house that looked out over the breathtaking countryside on one side and was big enough to give their teenage children, Oliver (pictured above) and Laura, a floor to themselves. They were also keen for the living space to lead directly onto the garden.

'As the whole point of the plot was to overlook the Chilterns, we decided to put the kitchen at the front of the house with huge triple-glazed window panels – I had to have as many as possible – with blinds to maintain our privacy,' says Claire.

The modern kitchen-dining room leads seamlessly into the pared-back, light-filled living area at the **Continued over next page** 





## Kitchen

The island is in the middle of the room, which has sweeping views over the Chilterns. All of the units are from Huf's sister company Stilart, while the worktops are white semi-gloss Corian, which reflects light and adds to the bright, spacious feel. Ultra-modern appliances, including a Gaggenau hob and extractor and a Miele fridge, are in keeping with the streamlined look, while a wooden breakfast bar adds warmth and echoes the furniture in the dining area. The bar stools are from John Lewis





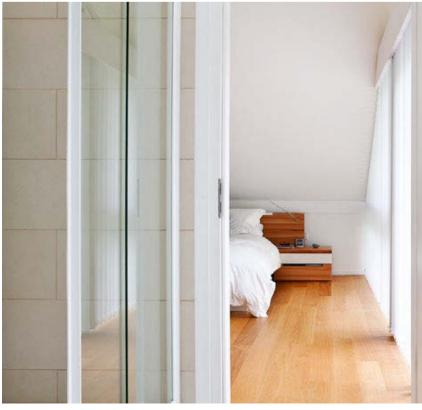


## First floor

The main bedroom and spare room are upstairs, away from Oliver and Laura's rooms in the basement. Huf's brand of white paint is used throughout, and the bathrooms are by Duravit







back, with sliding glass doors opening onto the outside. Designing the garden was a major project, and the landscaping involved as much construction as the house build.

'It's a sloping site and I wanted the garden to be formal, near the house and to use materials that tied in with the overall design. Andy Sturgeon has done a wonderful job,' says Claire.

A basement needed to be dug out at the front, with more than 100 lorry loads of soil removed, and because of strict council regulations about the view from the road, the staircase leading down to this part of the house had to be concealed behind a wall. Claire turned this to her advantage and disguised the staircase with a wall clad in cedar wood in front of flowerbeds planted with euphorbia, hydrangea, cistus and beech.

There are two large bedrooms and a den for the couple's teenage children in the basement, as well as a utility room and plenty of built-in storage. On the top floor is the main bedroom, a spare bedroom and a home office, all of which feel restful, thanks to the minimal decor that Claire chose to complement the contemporary style of the building. In total, the project cost £1.2 million, including the land, and there's no doubt it's been a huge success.

'The house is always light, even on a grey day,' says Claire. 'It was Ian's dream to build his own home and now we're living in it.'

# **ROOM WITH A VIEW**

Create more outdoor space with a stylish balcony or roof terrace



# $\textbf{OUTSIDE}\ INTERESTS\ \ \text{Can't tell your Juliet from your cantilevered? Follow this jargon-busting guide}$



JULIET This is a glass door on an upper floor with a safety railing. It provides more light than a standard window but doesn't increase the size of your home, so may not require planning permission.



**SUPPORTED** A platform is bolted to your home with most of the weight taken by posts fixed to the ground. Perfect for retrofitting to an existing house, these often have stairs for access to the garden.



**CANTILEVERED** Jutting out without any visible support, these are suited to new homes and almost impossible to retrofit. Careful engineering is required and they're usually limited to depths of 1,500-1,800mm.



**INTEGRATED** An intrinsic part of the building, this is factored into the design from the start of a whole house or remodelling project. A good architect can build in a balcony space from any sunny bedroom.

# WORDS CHRIS HASLAM. MAIN PHOTOGRAPH DOUGLAS GIBB/GAP INTERIORS

## MATERIAL CHOICE



Timber frames, especially oak, give your home a timeless, reassuringly solid finish. Try Welsh Oak Frame.



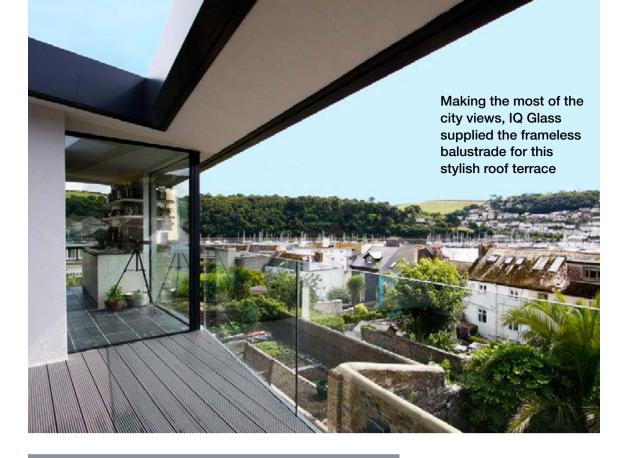
Inspired by luxury yachts, stainless steel offers a modern finish when teamed with glass. Try Steel and Glass Balustrades.



For the ultimate in sleek, minimalist design, finish your balcony with a frameless glass balustrade. Try IQ Glass.



Ornate cast-iron railings and balconies create a period feel for Juliet and larger designs. Try British Spirals & Castings.



## **RETROFIT** ROOF TERRA

Whether you live in a flat and crave outside space or dream of an all-day suntrap, if you have access to a flat roof you could create a terrace.

- Speak to a structural engineer to check that your potential terrace is load-bearing. If not, it will need to be reinforced. A specialist company such as Urban Roof Gardens will be able to help.
- Think about access to your new space. Replacing a window with a door of the same width doesn't require planning permission, but if you want a larger

opening, you'll need structural supports.

- Replace traditional roof felt it can be brittle - with a waterproof membrane and drainage. You can then finish the look with lightweight slabs, decking or artificial grass; try The Deck Tile Co.
- Unless it's completely surrounded by existing walls, the terrace will need railings for safety. A minimum height of 1,100mm is required for building regulations.
- If your new terrace will overlook the neighbours or block their view, you'll need to obtain planning permission first.

# Be prepared

Make sure you tick the following boxes and your balcony project will run smoothly. Verandas and balconies more than 300mm high don't come under your permitted development rights, so you'll generally require planning permission to add one to your existing home. Always double check with your local authority and architect first. Balconies can help increase outside space and provide shade beneath, but they must be far enough from your boundary not to intrude or overlook your neighbours. Any structure that has a drop of more than 600mm needs to be protected by a railing that's at least 1,100mm high in order to comply with building regulations. As well as this, the gap at the bottom of the railing bars should be no more than 99mm.

There are tricks that can help appease the planning officials. Modern frameless glass balustrades, for instance, won't alter the appearance of the building so they may be more likely to gain approval than other kinds.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE



## LITTLE WONDER

If you're converting your loft, make the most of the outlook with a mini fold-out balcony. The Velux Cabrio and Fakro FGH-V

P2 windows don't require expensive building work. Just push the windows outwards and you can use the space usually wasted in the eaves. There's a pop-out balustrade attached to the bottom window for safety and, space permitting, you can even create a larger terrace by fitting multiple windows. The Velux Cabrio (shown) starts at £1,889 for 94mm x 252mm.









t's been five years since Sam Howse, 44, and her husband, Steve, 40, moved into their Potton house near Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire with their two children, Jacob, 10, and Laila, eight. Here, Sam talks about the unique challenges and rewards of building a family home they hope to live in forever.

## Why did you decide to build your own house?

My husband was a farmer when we met and his family had sold their farm but kept some land. We had a cottage in a nearby village then, and Steve's dad's wish was that we could live back on the farm. Our budget was very tight so that's when we thought about buying a kit home and building on the family land, doing as much of the work as possible ourselves.

## Where did you live during the build?

For three years we stayed in a small caravan on site. The children were very little then: Jacob was two and Laila just a baby, so it was quite a

challenge. But the thought of creating our own dream home kept us going through it all.

## How did you decide on the style of house?

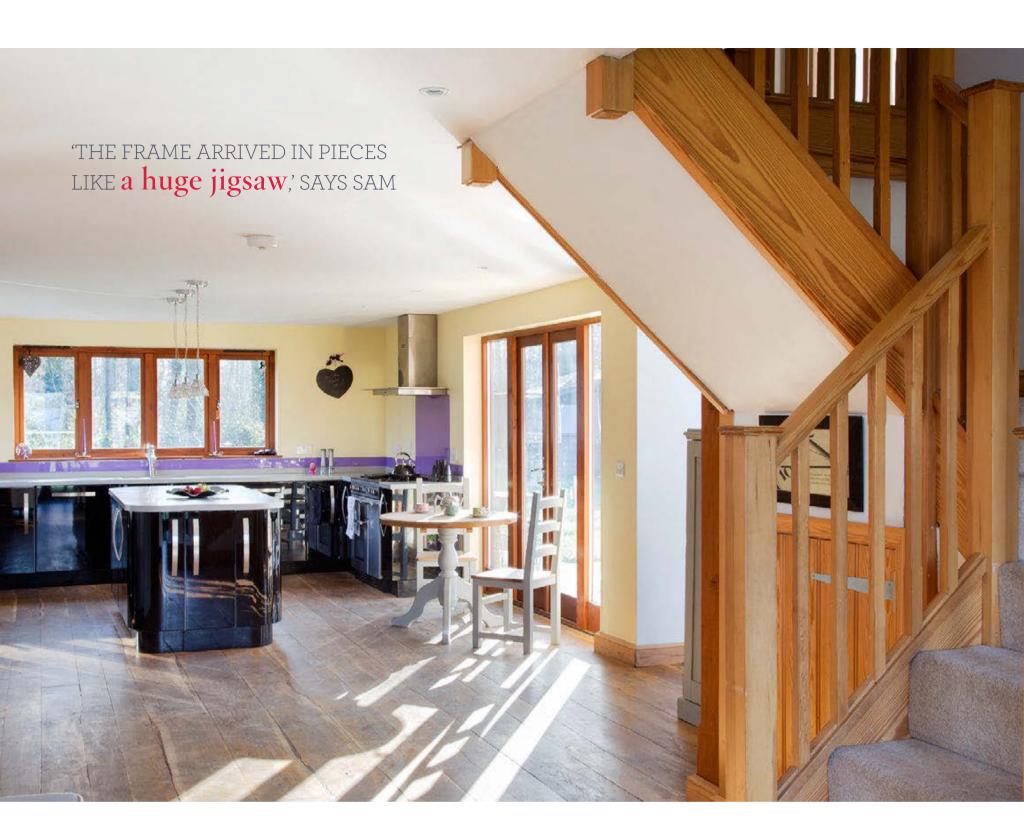
We had wanted to build an oak-framed property using wood from our land, but it would have taken too long to get it architecturally designed, so we went to see a Potton timber-framed show house. What we really liked about it was that you can simply pick a design off the shelf or have a big say in how you want your house to look. I had strong ideas about the layout and interior, so Potton did sketches and worked with us until it measured up to our ideal.

## What were your requirements?

The key thing for us was to have lots of space and light, especially after living in the caravan for so long. I wanted it to have character, with high ceilings, different roof pitches, a spacious hall and landing, big windows and three bedrooms - two doubles for the *Continued over next page* 







children, plus a bathroom, and a large bedroom and ensuite for us. Downstairs we were after an open-plan layout with a good flow, so the hall leads on to a very big kitchen, with a living and dining room on either side of the entrance.

#### Were there any problems with planning?

We had a bit of a hiccup because I wanted the living room to be vaulted. The house has an agricultural tie, which means you're only allowed so many square feet, and the planners thought we might put another floor in the vaulted space. We had to convince them that wouldn't happen.

#### What about finance?

It wasn't that straightforward – this was the time when everything was going wrong with the banks. We'd put money into a big poultry unit on the farm with the help of a business loan, and in the end we had to arrange a business loan for the house too, instead of a mortgage, simply because the banks weren't lending.

# So you had your own land, the money in place, the design agreed – what next?

First we had the foundations laid, then on the delivery day a lorry arrived with the timber frame – in pieces, like a huge jigsaw – and a crane. It was really exciting and I kept the children at home so they could watch it being put together. By the next day the downstairs had been laid out, and a couple of days later the upstairs was done and the roof trusses were in place too. You could soon see the rooms taking shape – it was a great feeling. Once it was completed, Potton came back to check the build and arranged to send people later to do the electrics and plumbing.

#### How much did you do yourselves?

Steve's very practical and we fitted the cladding using timber from our woods behind the house, partly because it felt right to use it and partly because of our budget. Steve also laid the oak flooring in the kitchen. *Continued over next page* 

#### Kitchen

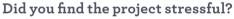
The couple kept the timber theme going inside as well as out, opting for a wooden staircase and windows, as well as oak flooring. The glossy black kitchen units contrast with the warm wood

#### Living room

Double-height windows and a vaulted ceiling create a stunning living space.
Two sets of French doors open on to the patio that wraps around the house







There's a lot to think about and it's a learning curve. We moved in a few months after the building was up, even though it wasn't finished, because it was November and the caravan was on its last legs. We lived in one bedroom, with no kitchen, no flooring downstairs and all the household belongings crammed in around us. But it was warm and we managed.

#### How much did it cost?

The house was around £84,000 five years ago. The build cost about £180,000, then we needed around £10,000 to finish it off. Each year we get another job done; we've recently had the drive gravelled and we'd like to build some balconies. We estimate it would have cost us much more if we hadn't done so much ourselves.

#### Would you recommend it to other people?

I think you're either the sort of person who takes a risk or you're not. We were lucky because we already owned the land, but it was still a big gamble financially for us.

#### Was it a personal challenge?

I had breast cancer and was going through chemotherapy, which wasn't easy, but the house gave me a real focus. I had my design folders out all the time – I was sourcing my lovely crystal lights, my smart black kitchen and drawing up lots of plans of how the rooms would look.

#### What do you love about your home?

Living here is amazing. We wouldn't have been able to buy a house like this, and for the kids to have acres of land to play on is very special. I adore the style of the house – it looks like a barn from the outside, and we feel very proud that the wood cladding comes from our own plot.

#### Do you think you'll stay here for good?

We plan never to leave. I absolutely love the house – it's such an achievement.





# FRAMED IN WOOD

One of the oldest building materials, timber is still at the heart of today's new houses



#### WHY CHOOSE WOOD?

Timber frames are proving to be a big hit with self-builders, according to Lawrence Young, chairman of the Structural Timber Association. 'The material now accounts for around 75 per cent of the self-build market,' he says. 'One of the main advantages is its ease of construction. These systems are made in a factory, which speeds up work on site, thereby reducing project overheads.'

Lawrence adds: 'Construction has come a long way since the prefabricated homes that were erected after the Second World War, which have a reputation for being flimsy and hard to maintain. Modern

timber systems couldn't be further from this, offering warm, cosy and attractive homes for a variety of self-builders.'

Put simply, a timber-frame house is based on a wooden structure rather than traditional masonry such as brick or stone.

Using timber helps to ensure the house has an airtight envelope of insulation, meaning heat doesn't escape – this lowers heating bills. These houses also have true right angles and straight edges, making fitting kitchens and bathrooms, tiling, wallpapering and laying carpet easier.

If your timber-frame house is being constructed using panels, for example,

work can be started at any time of year, whereas bad weather holds up progress on brick-and-block building work because materials become too damp to work with.

Once the structure has been completed, maintaining a timber-built home is the same as with any other sort of property, with no special services needed. Wood is one of the oldest building materials in the world and stands the test of time – we still have timber-framed buildings that date back to the 15th century. All materials are treated from the outset to help avoid problems such as rot, damp and mould. Discuss this with your supplier.

#### FULLY COVERED

Insuring your timber-frame house isn't always as easy as it should be, according to the experts

'Insurers have misconceived ideas about the fire risk,' says self-build specialist Marcus Saunders at insurance broker Lucas Fettes. 'They don't understand that most timbers are treated with fire retardants and most panels have additional preventative measures such as fire boards added to slow down the spreading of fire.'

If you're self-building using a timber frame, you'll usually have to inform your buildings insurance company that your new home is of 'non-standard construction' and send relevant proof of fire-retardant measures and so on.

However, because timber-frame houses generally take less time to erect and complete, your site insurance costs should be lower.

'Site insurance is a comprehensive policy that combines many different elements of cover that are vital to making sure that you're adequately protected during your self-build project,' says Michael Carrington, team leader at the Self-Build Zone (selfbuildzone.com), which recommends insurance packages to self-builders. Michael says you should expect to pay £200-£250 for three months' cover, which includes the following:

- New works
- Existing structures (if applicable)
- Public liability
- Employer's liability
- Legal expenses
- Your own tools and plant, hired-in plant and machinery, site huts, caravans and contents
- Employees' tools and personal effects, personal possessions and personal accident.





Teaming timber with another material is increasingly popular. 'We're seeing a trend for oak frames to be used with structural insulated panels (SIPs),' says Jamie Wilson, sales and marketing manager at Carpenter Oak. 'We've done a couple of projects where the panels help with the structural work. This allows you to be freer with the aesthetic of the frame as it doesn't have to do all the work of holding up the building.'

This approach is opening up the traditional 'oak-frame' house to a sleeker, more modern look. 'We're seeing stainless-steel flitch plates replacing mortise and tenon joints,' adds Jamie. 'These have the look of ship's timbers or warehouse conversions.' By simplifying the oak frame and letting the panels take the strain, you can also cut the costs involved in a complex framework.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE





#### LET IT GLOW

'Lighting an exposed oak frame in a vaulted ceiling can look amazing,' says Michael Connolly at oak-frame specialist Oakwrights.
'Consider installing LED strips around the top of the frame before the roof slopes into the wall. Or if you want a pendant light, get the hole drilled and first-fix wiring in place before the roof is tiled. That way, the cable can just drop straight through the roof. Very neat.'

# THE RIGHT TREATMENT

Structural timber is

usually **European** whitewood, which is strength graded and kiln-dried so that it's suitable for construction. You can also build with an oak frame. There are specialist designers and manufacturers who offer both traditional and contemporary styles. These can be integral to the building or designed so they're on show, forming an attractive feature in their own right. 'Any number of timber systems can be brought together by a designer to help create your perfect home,' adds Lawrence Young, chairman of the Structural Timber Association.



## WHY OPT FOR A CUSTOM-BUILD HOME?

In terms of the construction process, custom-build is usually the fastest way to a self-build home. For instance, timber-frame modular homes can be erected to a weather-tight stage within days so you can start wiring and plumbing at the same time as bricklaying and tiling. However, you do need to have made all your decisions in advance – you can't easily change your mind once the frame is ordered – and you must have carefully considered almost every design choice, including finishes, before the frame can go into manufacture.

This route can also be the most modestly priced option, depending on which system you choose. You'll save on architect payments and won't be tempted to add extravagant features halfway through the building work. And it's less of a risk, as you'll be able to visit the various houses before you select your style. You can also choose all your fixtures and fittings direct from the company.

As most package companies will suggest approved contractors, you can bypass the whole stage of finding a suitable building firm. Some will assist you with locating land, as well as obtaining planning permission and building regulations approval. They'll provide support all the way through the project, including help with submitting your VAT reclaim, as building materials for new homes are zero-rated for VAT.

Custom-build is a great choice for people who want a home tailored exactly to their

specifications, but who don't have the time or expertise to do it themselves; those who are working to a tight budget, as costs can be more easily estimated early on; or people who are moving to a new part of the country and don't know local tradesmen or suppliers.

Modular houses can work well in difficult locations, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where it might be difficult to obtain planning permission for a traditional house requiring deep foundations. The same goes for rural spots as the buildings are quick to put up and require minimum input from a contractor. Heb Homes, for example, specialises in SIP technology (see Choosing Your Style, below) for homes in remote areas.

Finally, some of these houses are transportable. For instance, the modular House Beautiful Homes offered by Futureform can be moved from one site to another. See p42 for more information.

# What's the PROCESS?



The House Beautiful Homes collection includes this contemporary Mulberry design

**Spend time researching** all the custom-build home companies on the market and decide which one best suits your needs.

Meet with your chosen company. If it's abroad – for instance, Huf Haus is based in Germany – you'll be invited out to its factory for a preliminary discussion, usually on a no-obligation basis.

A company expert will visit your site to make an assessment, and a design will be prepared for you based on the modular-home company's pattern book.

Once you've approved the design, planning permission is sought. The company you're using may apply for this for you. If not, you'll have to submit the application yourself using guidelines from your local council. After permission has been granted, your bespoke home is built in the factory.

**Meanwhile, a 'slab' is laid** at the site for the new house to sit on.

The frame is delivered along with the building materials.

**Your company works** alongside the building contractor – either its own, or one chosen by you – to assemble the house.

It will clad the outside, put on the roof, and do any external joinery work. This is known as the weathertight stage. If you want, it will also finish the house inside and out.

Continued over page

# 2 choosing your style

'The key is to be led by your design ambitions and the choice of external materials first and foremost,' says Michael Holmes, spokesperson for The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show. 'If you want a contemporary open-plan house with lots of glass, then a steel frame might be your first choice, whereas if you prefer a traditional cottage with beamed ceilings, you'd be more likely to go for an oak-frame home. If you dream of a house built from stone, then masonry would probably be at the top of your list, while if you wanted a cost-effective New England-style home with wood cladding, you'd probably choose a timber frame.'

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Common options are oak frame, timber frame, brick and block, or structural insulated panels (SIPs), which can be clad with cedarwood, weatherboarding, brick 'slips' or other finishes to offer both excellent thermal properties and an attractive exterior.
- Oak frame and engineered SIPs represent the old and new faces of modular-home construction and are among the most popular choices for UK builders. 'An oak frame is designed by a specialist and made from hundreds of individual posts, beams, struts and ties. Each has a unique place in the design and must be assembled precisely on site,' explains Julian Owen of Julian Owen Associates Architects in Nottingham. 'SIPs consist of a rigid insulation sandwiched between two boards that are firmly bonded together in an off-site factory to form a strong structural sheet. The building is then
- assembled on site by craning the boards into place and bolting them together this is often known as a "flatpack" house.'
- Some ultra-modern properties, such as Futureform's House Beautiful Homes, are built on a modular basis, so they can be updated with extra rooms or another storey as the owners' needs change. 'A single house may consist of four to six modules, dependent on the architectural design requirement,' explains Pete Godwin, systems manager for Futureform. 'Individual modules can be up to 15 metres long and 4.2 metres wide with an infinite range of shapes. As a building system, it can be de-mounted and used again, unlike most traditional buildings. If the client finds a new plot, the house can simply be moved.'
- Find a directory of custom-build companies at selfbuildportal.org.uk. See p42 for more information on House Beautiful Homes with Futureform.

#### Project-manage your **CUSTOM-BUILD**

The crucial point is to decide how involved you wish to be. Many people choose a modular house precisely because they want to be hands-off and simply walk into their new home when it's built. Take time to decide on your level of involvement, because once you've signed the contract, it can be difficult to re-negotiate your role in the process.

Acting as your own project manager may seem daunting, but working with a package company takes a lot of the anxiety out of the equation. You can run the site, order materials and deal with contractors. but you'll still have the safety net of the company to fall back on.

Your supplier may provide you with a proper build schedule and what's called a 'bill of quantities', setting out the materials and labour you'll need, as part of its project management pack.

You could appoint a professional project manager recommended by the package company or recruit one yourself. They're hard to find for individual projects, but are usually architects or someone from a building firm - check online for people near you. How much you leave to them is up to you: you could, for example, agree that they order all the building materials and schedule labour, while you deal with finding everything for the internal specification.

A project manager's fee will depend on the level of service you ask them to provide. However, bear in mind that the cost of fees may be recouped because they can source materials at discounted prices, negotiate with contractors and remedy a potential problem before it becomes expensive to fix.

Finally, you could opt for the 'turnkey' option where you agree the design and fit-out with the package company, then leave them and the building contractor to it. This is the ideal option if you're currently living far away from your new house, but it does mean you have to trust them to get on with the job.



# 3 deciding on the design

Although it comes prefabricated and follows a pattern book, a custom-build house will be bespoke to your needs. If you want to be sure your home is as individual as you are, contact a reputable supplier as soon as possible, says Brent Ackerman, project manager at Potton. 'For instance, Potton will modify any of their designs and even work with the customer to come up with something completely bespoke.'

You'll be given total control over the choice of internal fixtures and fittings, such as doors and flooring, with most reputable companies, explains Brent. 'There are some practical considerations of course - when specifying doors and windows, for example - so it's important to work with the supplier to arrive at the best value-for-money package,' he says. One option is 'part-finish', which allows you to have input into rooms such as the kitchen and bathroom. Discuss all the alternatives in detail with the manufacturer before making your final decision.

Timber-frame modular homes can be completely bespoke one-offs - so you could have a home designed by an architect (see Is It Worth Employing An Architect? on p40) and then engage a company to make a frame for it, says Michael Holmes, spokesperson for The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show. 'Many manufacturers offer a full design service too. There's also the option to have a standard design from a plan book and this will save money in design fees, so someone working to a tight budget might choose this option and just change the internal layout,' he explains.

#### **ECO CREDENTIALS**

Custom-build homes vary enormously in their specification and performance. They range from a low-cost timber frame that meets building regulations requirements for energy efficiency, to more expensive super-energy-efficient systems with walls so thick, well-insulated and airtight, you can build a 'passive house' that requires no central heating. Some have the insulation ready installed (closed panel), while others leave this to the customer.

'Anyone looking for a very energyefficient home should consider a timber frame because it's lightweight and therefore very quick to heat up,' advises Michael.

#### DO YOUR RESEARCH

When you've decided on a building design you like, ask the company to arrange a visit to its factory and - if possible - to a house similar to the one you've chosen.

Also look out for industry open days and seminars aimed at self-builders. For example, Potton, one of the most established names in the industry, runs regular events. See selfbuildacademy.co.uk for further details.

## GETTING PLANNING PERMISSION

Once you're happy with the design from the manufacturer, it's time to seek planning permission. Expect it to take between eight to 12 weeks to gain approval, depending on your local authority and how busy the planning department is.

Usually your modular-home supplier will have had preliminary discussions with the planning department to gauge what will be acceptable in your area. It may even be prepared to submit the planning application on your behalf; the charge for this will be built into the company's costs. For advice on how to make sure the planning process goes smoothly, visit the government's Planning Portal (planningportal.gov.uk).

However, there is a word of warning from Pete Tonks, architectural consultant at Oakwrights, which specialises in oak-framed houses. 'Until quite recently it was almost common practice to get pre-application advice from the relevant

planning officer, even to the point of arranging a meeting with them or inviting him or her to visit the site,' he says. 'You'd ask what, in general terms, was acceptable, with a view to minimising unnecessary design costs and inappropriate submissions. But increasingly planners are reluctant to provide this service, citing pressure of work and under-resourcing. Some have even started charging for it, while others simply refuse to discuss any application without detailed drawings. Central government policy has been to encourage a pre-application meeting to speed up the process, and many local authorities have this as a statement of aim within their charter, so it's worth checking.'



# FINANCING YOUR BUILD

Unless you already have the funds to finance the build in cash, you'll most likely need a self-build mortgage. The main difference between a self-build mortgage and a standard mortgage is that the funds are released in stages (see p39 for more details).

Most package companies will require a hefty deposit payable upfront, so when looking for a self-build mortgage you might be best advised to seek an 'accelerator' or 'advanced' type, where you get the money before each step is completed.

'You pay in stages, starting with a deposit of 40-50 per cent, with the full balance payable prior to delivery. Make sure your deposit usually a high percentage of the final price - is protected by paying into a client account,' advises Michael Holmes of the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show. A client account is one set up with the company, which protects both of you should anything go wrong. There is some evidence to suggest that in terms of mortgage applications, banks are starting to look more favourably on modular homes in comparison to traditional self-builds. 'Kit homes can offer more certainty over the total cost of a project,' says Lloyds Banking Group's commercial director, Stephen Noakes. 'The speed of the process also means that kit-home projects are often more modestly priced compared to other ways of building a home, making it a more accessible option.'

#### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

A mid-spec home will cost around £900-£1,100 a square metre, says self-build expert Chris Bates of self-build.co.uk. However, a top quality build, focusing on good energy efficiency and excellent finishes, will demand a bigger budget. Oak-frame packages tend

to fit in the mid- to high-spec bracket, as most self-builders want to complete their projects with materials and finishes that match up to the quality of the oak construction.

'The level of service you choose will also have a significant impact on the ultimate cost of your project,' says Chris. 'While a selfmanaged project might be completed at the lower end of the scale, a turnkey option is likely to stretch beyond the average build  $\cos t$ - expect to pay more in the range of £1,300-£1,400 a square metre for this type of package."

#### GETTING THE BEST PRICE

'Look for what's included in the price, and make sure you're comparing like with like when choosing the best supplier,' says Michael. 'Some frames, for example, provide the walls but not the roof, while others include secondfix timber options such as doors and windows, stairs and even skirting and architrave.'

Many companies offer a 'free design service' as part of their package. Bear in mind, however, that the cost of the company's designer or architect will be factored into the overall price you pay, so never assume you're getting something for nothing.

Do your research thoroughly. Visit the company and its factory if possible, and speak to previous clients. 'We're talking about some large sums of money here, so it's important to be sure that the package company is financially sound,' says Brent Ackerman, project manager at Potton.

#### Finding your PERFECT PLOT

Modular-home companies may be able to help clients find the ideal plot of land, says Brent Ackerman, project manager at Potton. 'Some will have sections on their websites highlighting areas of available land, and most will be able to offer advice. Potton's Self-build Academy runs a series of seminars and workshops, including advice on finding a plot.' For more information, visit selfbuildacademy.co.uk.

If you want to find a site yourself, see Smart Ways To Find A Plot on p37.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE







hen they swapped their family home for a 1960s bungalow in Over, Cambridgeshire, Patricia and Mick Sumpter had grand plans. Although they were downsizing after their two children had flown the nest, they still wanted light, space and a stylish place to live.

The couple had sold their Grade II listed four-bedroom farmhouse in the same village and bought the two-bedroom bungalow for £270,000. They loved the property's large garden, but were less than inspired by the dowdy post-war architecture and poky interiors, so they decided to renovate it.

Patricia and Mick craved open-plan living and considered building a glass extension at the rear, but their architect, Meredith Bowles of Mole Architects, advised against it, saying: 'Rather than putting a glass room at the back, which is expensive and would still leave you with a horrible house at the front, why not rip out all the walls and turn it into one big open-plan room leading onto the garden, and put the extension at the front?'

A multitude of 1960s sins were hidden by the new facade, a dramatic row of front-facing gables that create a jagged sawtooth roof line, all covered in Scandi-style cedar cladding.

The new extension houses two bedrooms and a bathroom, all with high, pitched ceilings and skylights that make them feel bigger. A detached garage at the side was incorporated into the property and turned into a guest bathroom, utility room and storage for Mick's three motorbikes; the former path between garage and house became the hallway.

At the back, the original house is now an open-plan kitchen/dining/living room with doors to the garden. With the money saved by not building a glazed extension, the Sumpters converted the loft into his-and-hers studies; in total, their house grew from 102 square metres to 176 square metres.

While the striking exterior is the major talking point, that wasn't the original idea. Meredith's first design of a two-storey frontage with columns was rejected by the planners, who said it didn't fit the suburban streetscape. He explains, 'They Continued over next page



'SOMETIMES IT'S GOOD TO push the boat out,'
SAYS MICK. 'YOU DON'T WANT TO PUT SOMETHING IN
AND TAKE IT OUT LATER - THAT'S A FALSE ECONOMY'







told me that the houses around this area all had gables, so I thought, "If they want gables, I'll give them gables".'

Now the open-plan living area is sleek and modern with streamlined furniture in red and grey. Full-length Velfac windows overlook the pretty garden, with its magnolia, cherry, apple and birch trees. Patricia and Mick replaced the room's old fireplace with an integrated woodburner, but found that they rarely had to use it as the house is wrapped in Celotex insulation, while the nine photovoltaic panels on the roof generate £750 a year in electricity.

The couple also saved money by repurposing old furniture – Mick painted wooden cheese crates and made them into bookshelves, and created a desk by placing an old glass shower door on filing cabinets. But while he advises other homeowners to make do and mend, he says it's worth spending on an architect. 'Meredith was expensive, but we wouldn't have got this without him,' says Mick, 62, a freelance computer consultant. 'We knew what we wanted. but we couldn't visualise it.'

As the nine-month build neared its end, the couple ran out of money for a kitchen. They contemplated going to Ikea for a cheap, temporary one, but then they spotted a design they loved that was available on a buy-now, pay-later scheme. 'A year later, I was lucky enough to get a decent bonus and we paid for it,' says Mick. 'Sometimes it's good to push the boat out. You don't want to put something in and take it out later – that's a false economy.'

This live-for-the-moment philosophy is especially poignant as Patricia died in February 2013. 'Pat was very pleased with the outcome,' says Mick. 'It was her project and all the credit goes to her.' Her vision has left quite a legacy. A neighbour has since revamped his own bungalow, while another Over resident has built a Huf house.

The Sumpters spent just £120,000 on the renovation, and their house was recently valued at £460,000. However, Mick has no plans to sell. 'My wife and I loved this house,' he says, 'and now I love it.'



# CLAD ALL OVER

Bring the warmth and beauty of natural timber to your exterior



# $\textbf{WOODS} \ TO \ CHOOSE \quad \text{Timber cladding is a stunning exterior finish for contemporary homes and flats}$

There are a number of different timber options, each with its own look. While most wood cladding needs regular treatment to keep it in good condition, Western red cedar is widely used because it has a natural resistance to decay, so it can be installed without treatment. The

life expectancy of cedar cladding is around 60 years. Expect to pay £25-£40 a square metre, plus installation costs.

• If budget is an issue, do your research thoroughly, as cedar cladding, for instance, comes in different grades. Some products have no knots for a smooth finish, while

others come with minor imperfections but have the advantage of being less expensive.

• Check that your contractor pays close attention to the areas around doors and windows when fitting and uses a mastic sealant to ensure the cladding is weatherproof and watertight.

#### **EDGE CHOICE**



Tongue-and-groove boards slot together to give a flush and contemporary finish. The cladding shown is in larch.



Feather-edge tapered boards overlap slightly and are suitable for rustic or period homes.



Plain straight-edge cladding is ideal for a fuss-free, modern look, and for smaller areas.



Shiplap has a bevelled surface that interlocks, good for heavy-use areas.

• All cladding shown here is from Silva



Even if you're not building from scratch, you may be able to have wood cladding fitted to your existing house.

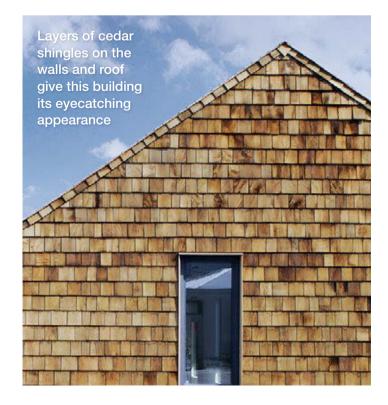
The most suitable homes are 1950s and 1960s properties with flat walls. It's less successful on Victorian houses, as exterior detail and plastering is usually too ornate.

If you live in a terrace or semi, you must consider neighbouring properties, and you should get advice from your council first as there may be planning considerations, particularly if you're in a conservation area.

'The most important thing is the basic aesthetics of the house,' says House

Beautiful expert and TV builder Tommy Walsh. 'You can clad any house you want, but if the property itself is aesthetically poor, there's only so much you can do. However, cladding has a benefit in that it improves the thermal performance of a building.'

Make sure cladding comes from a sustainable source and try to buy as locally as possible to reduce transport costs. Good specialists include Silva and Vincent Timber. Look for the Timber Decking and Cladding Association CladMark, a quality assurance scheme. It should also have a guarantee of at least 15 years.



### Board member

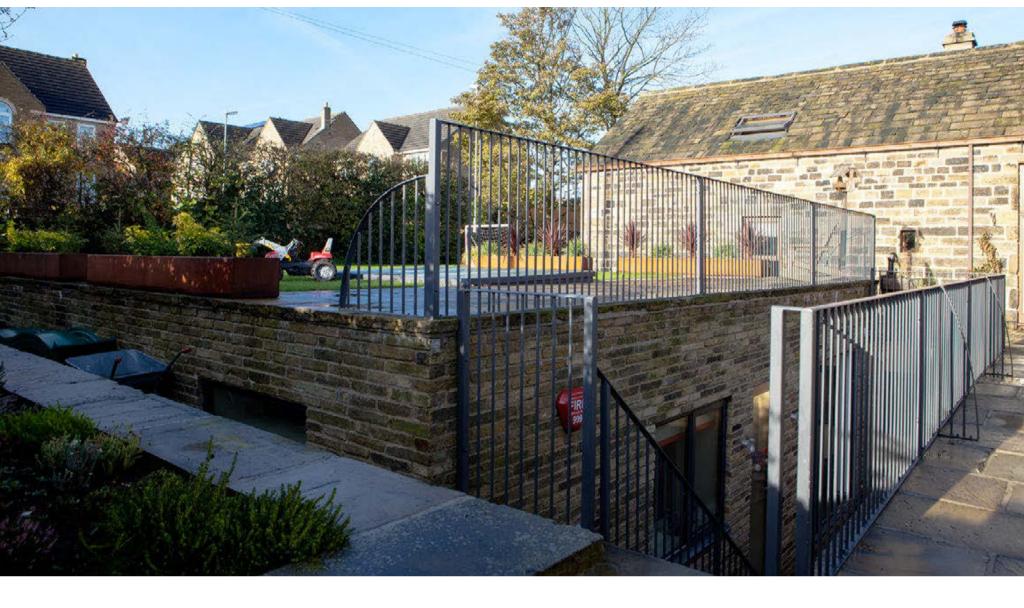
For a different look. consider the alternatives available, including wood shingles and shakes, which use shorter boards than traditional cladding. Shingles These are neater than shakes and look great as roof or wall tiles. Shakes are thicker and heavier than shingles, which tends to make them better suited to more rustic settings.

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE















or three years, solicitor Heather Parkin, 39, and her sales director husband Greg, 46, fought in vain to extend their Grade II listed four-bedroom cruck-frame barn near Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

The couple, who have two sons, Henry, nine, and Stan, six, had bought the property in 2007 for £475,000. Previous owners virtually rebuilt the 550-year-old property during a major renovation and Heather and Greg were about to give up on their own extension when an extraordinary idea caught their imagination. Heather tells the story of how they took on the fantastic challenge of going down a level.

'When we moved into the house, it was just the right size, but when Stan was born we needed more space, particularly when people came to stay. We decided to extend and submitted plans for a garden room, which were rejected on the grounds that it would alter the appearance of the historic long barn. We appealed the decision and lost, so then we enlisted the help of a local architect, Andrew Brown from Design Space Architecture. We were thinking of building a glass box between the kitchen and detached garage to use as a dining room or flexible living area. When that idea was also rejected, we felt that after three years we were getting nowhere.

Then Andrew suggested, "Why not go underground?" We had dismissed the idea at first because we thought it would be too damp and dingy, but Andrew drew up some sketches and we realised it could work. We took the proposal to the planning department and to our amazement it passed straight away.

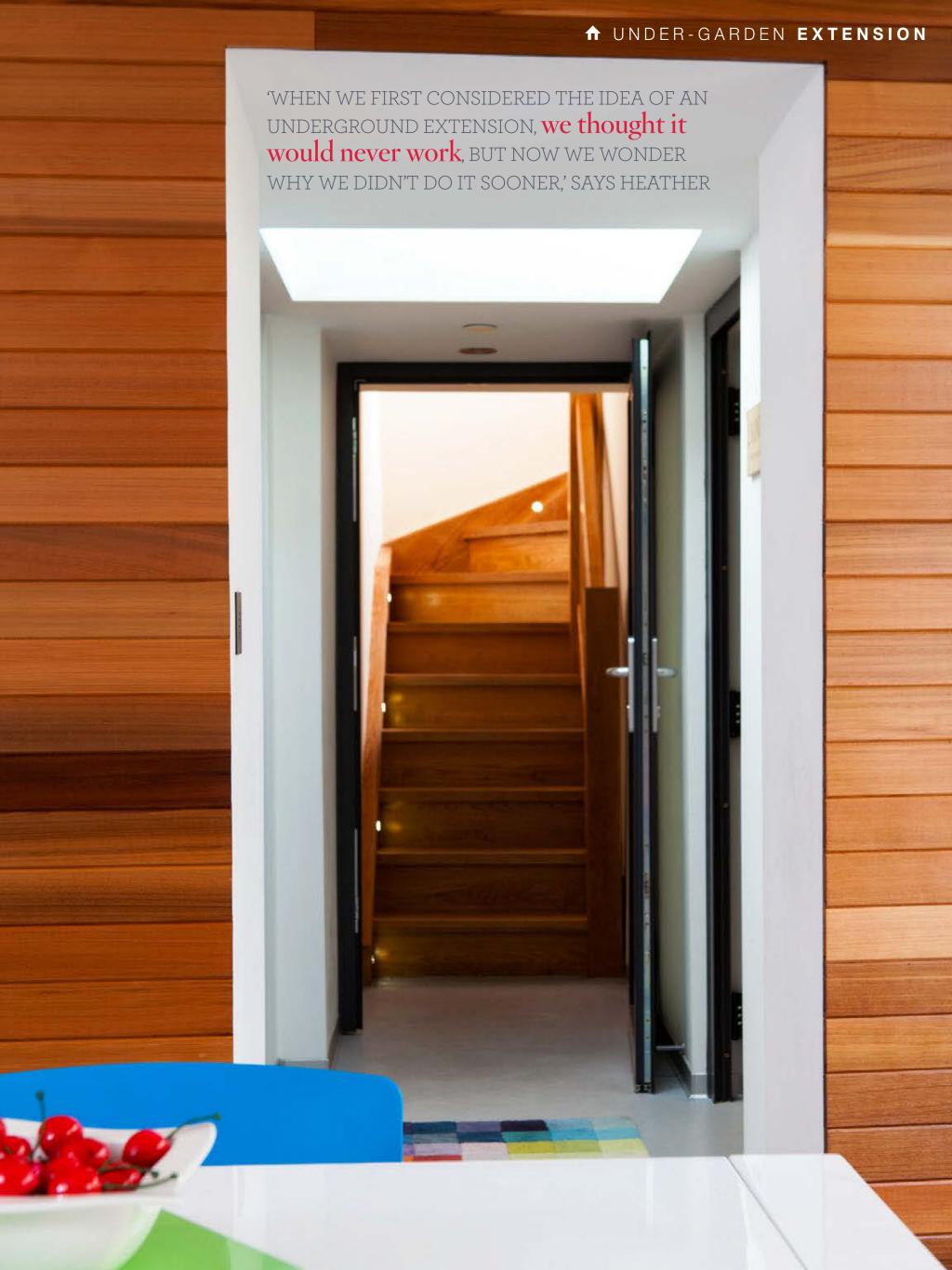
We agreed to keep the extension modern
– a total contrast to the 15th-century house – so
we'd have the best of both worlds. I wanted to
have fun and create a bold, colourful space we
can all enjoy, and that's flexible enough to
evolve with our Continued over next page

#### Exterior

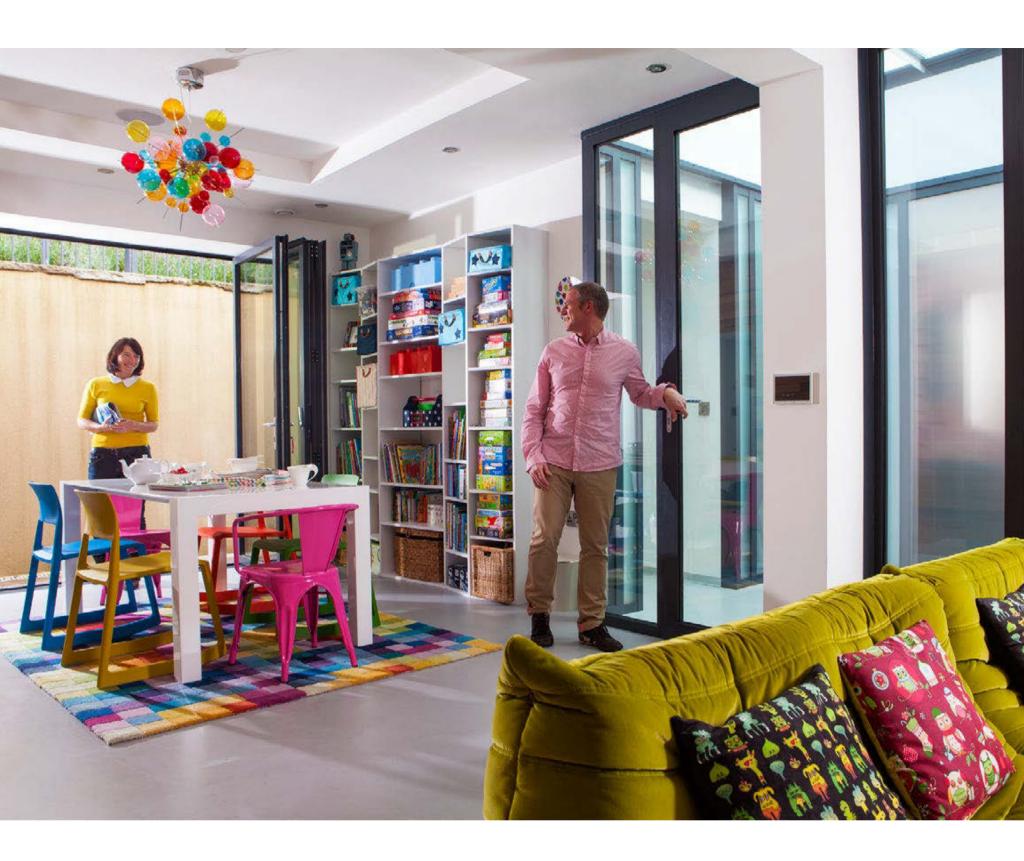
Steel railings mark the external entrance to this innovative stone-clad extension. After the build, the garden was re-landscaped with topsoil, turf and Yorkstone paths

#### Hall

A bespoke wooden staircase with illuminated steps links the new addition to the main house







#### Living area

The curved redcedar wall draws the eye through the living area. Slot windows and glass doors add interest and light. The extension is fitted with a heat-recovery system and highspec electrics, both from Norcroft Energy. The Ligne Roset sofa, dining table from made.com and Vitra chairs from nest.co.uk add a burst of colour

changing needs. Work began while we were on holiday. We left with a lawn and returned to find a vast hole, five metres deep in its place.

Ground testing revealed a base level of loose rock and shale that was easy to dig out, and created firm boundaries in which to build the extension. The walls were constructed out of polystyrene bricks filled with waterproof concrete, which were assembled Lego-fashion within a few days. Breeze-block walls were built inside this outer layer, and the building was protected against damp with a waterproof membrane, then heavily insulated.

At the same time Greg oversaw the complex drainage system. Most of the rainwater runs off the glass roof of the light well and dissipates naturally through six inches of soil and grass. The rest runs into channels and is pumped into the main drains.

It took five months to complete the shell of the underground building, which includes steel support beams and a concrete-covered steel-mesh roof system. Fitting the light well was the most difficult part. It weighs just under a ton and had to be supported by a ring beam, but it gives us masses of light.

Joining the extension to the main house was the turning point. While a hole was dug between the old and new properties, we moved into rented accommodation for two months. When we came home, everywhere was freezing cold and covered in dust, but we could start to see it all come together.

Finishing the interior was great fun. Greg and I are keen cyclists and got tickets to the velodrome at the 2012 Olympics, which inspired the curved red-cedar wall. It took eight weeks for the wood to come all the way from Canada, but it was well worth the wait – it's now my favourite feature.

There were a number of times during the build when the **Continued over page** 







budget was spiralling out of control and we thought we might have made a big mistake. In the end, it cost us £300,000 and took a year, but it was definitely the right thing to do.

It's given us 100 square metres of extra space, comprising two bedrooms, a living room, bathroom, hall, utility and storeroom, and now we use it more than the main house. The boys sleep down here so Greg and I sit here in the evenings. It's so light and spacious, and the doors fold back onto a small outdoor patio, so it's great all year round.

With the interior finished, the final job was to landscape the garden. We've laid soil and turf on the roof, rebuilt the flowerbeds and paved the paths around it so you'd hardly know there's a building underneath.

When Greg and I first considered the idea of creating an underground extension, we thought it would never work, but now we wonder why we didn't do it sooner.'

#### **Utility room**

A kitchenette/laundry room and a separate storeroom were included in the design so the extension can be used independently of the main house at a later stage

#### Stan's bedroom

Both boys' rooms are painted in cheerful colours and fitted with Argos beds and wall shelves from Aspace

#### Bathroom

Heather and Greg brightened up the windowless bathroom with vibrant Italian tiles. Glazed internal doors let light flow through the new space

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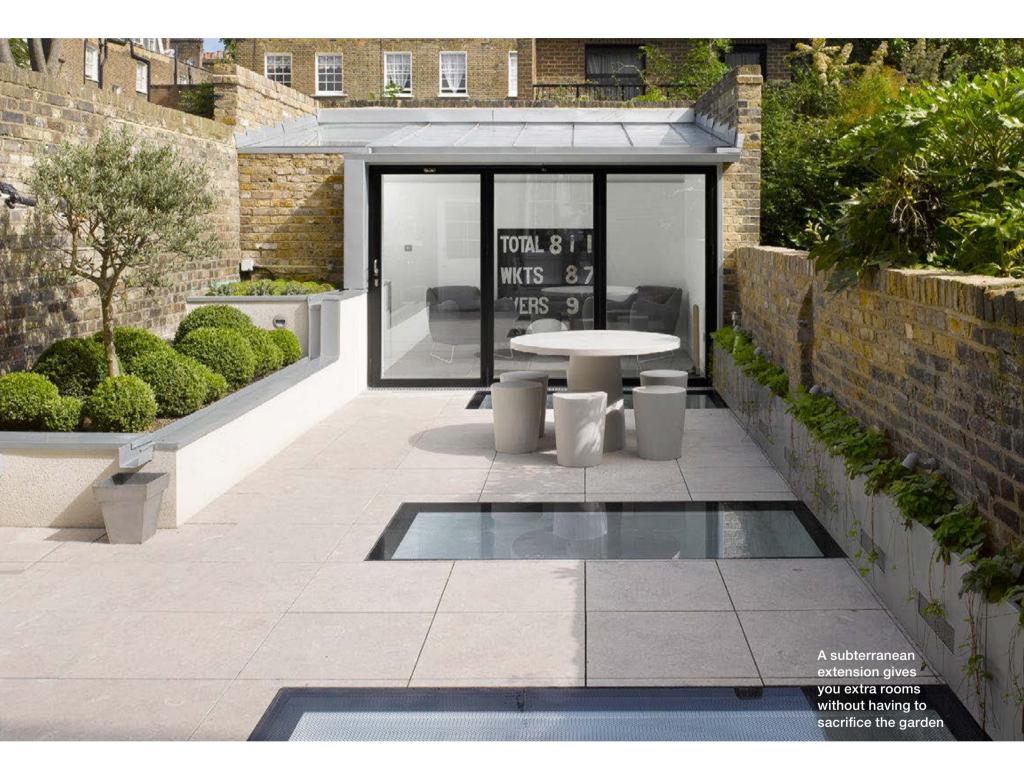
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# **BELOW GROUND**

Need more space? Under-garden extensions are the new way to add rooms



#### $\textbf{GETTING} \ PERMISSION \quad \text{There's a demand for these types of designs, but not every local authority is keen}$

'The rules for this type of project differ between areas,' says Billy Heyman, managing director at building and refurbishment company BTL Property. 'In London, in Kensington and Chelsea, for example, it's still possible to get planning permission for an under-garden basement going up to halfway up the garden, in both the front and back, while Hammersmith and Fulham only grants permission for extending at the front.'

Billy points out that issues with drainage and the size and positioning of light wells

are the major stumbling blocks. Removing soil and replacing it with a concrete structure raises the risk of flooding as rainwater has nowhere to go, and also puts pressure on existing drainage systems. Light wells can have an impact on the overall look of the street and create light pollution for neighbours, so you need the advice of an architect with particular experience of this kind of project and a sensible grasp of costs.

'Often in cases where permission has been granted, people subsequently find

that the cost and complication involved in waterproofing makes the extension prohibitively expensive to build,' adds Billy. 'Also, to help with the requirements on drainage, it's likely that you'll need to add one metre depth in topsoil, which means you may have to either dig much deeper or have a much lower ceiling height than you may have anticipated. This will have cost implications and could compromise your living space.' Visit planningportal. gov.uk for further information on planning permission.

Continued over next page





# apropos

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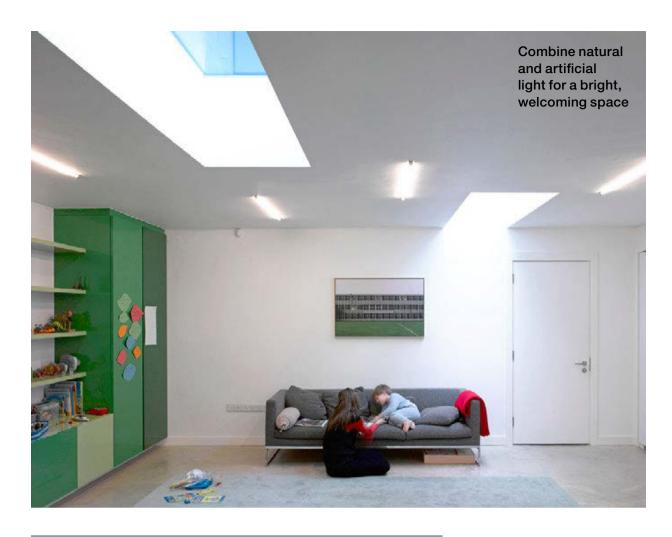
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#### **BRING IN** ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

The major challenge with under-garden extensions is getting in enough light. There are ways to harness natural daylight (see below), but internal artificial lighting systems are also worth investigating.

See the Heliobus mirror-based system, which directs daylight to where it is needed, or Coelux, which creates the appearance and feel of natural sunlight and sky using

Glass panels in the ceiling let in light from the main house

nanotechnology. 'A good way to enhance the lighting is to strongly illuminate a light well with a concealed source,' says Hugo Tugman of Architect Your Home.

If there's space for an external courtyard, illuminating it with different 'colours' – for instance cooler, whiter light during the day and warmer, yellower light after dark – can be extremely effective.

## Natural effect

Installing a light well, or a series of them, is the best way to bring daylight into the extension. 'This also gives you natural ventilation,' says Paul Schaaf of the Basement Design Studio. However, he warns that planning rules often include restrictions on shape and size, so it's worth getting professional advice from the start.

Alternatively, consider a glass 'floor' on the ceiling, from around £1,200 at IQ Glass. 'Walkable glazed panels are great in terms of allowing light in,' says Paul. 'However, planners tend to restrict them to the sides of the garden or close to the rear of the existing building to avoid light pollution.'

Having outside space alongside your extension may mean you can install folding sliding doors. Hugo Tugman of Architect Your Home says, 'The larger this space the better from a lighting point of view.'



#### WARM AND DRY

Once they've dug a hole big enough for your new extension, your builder will create a concrete box with a lid to line this hole to keep the extension from flooding.

Paul Schaaf of the Basement Design Studio explains: 'Our method is not to keep water out but to allow it to flow in the walls and floor,' he says. 'We use Delta membrane, applied to the internal face of the walls and floor slab, and water is collected and discharged via sump pumps. The walls are drylined and insulated, the floors are insulated and covered with screed. and underfloor heating is usually installed.'

Once the 'lid' is put in place, it's covered with insulation, then the garden is reinstated.

Digging a room under your garden could cost less than a basement conversion. 'You use a mini-digger to excavate the garden, whereas workers under the house would be digging by hand,' says Michael Holmes, spokesperson for The National Homebuilding & Renovating Show. 'The soil can be removed more easily too, which will also help to reduce costs.'

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE

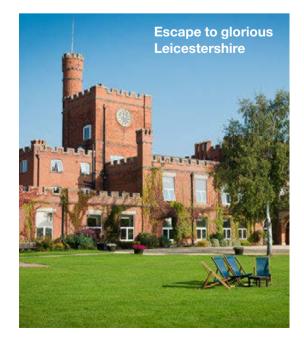
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# Below STAIRS

Spotting the potential in a Victorian villa, a chef and his family have created a truly modern home

WORDS PHILIPPA STOCKLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY TIM SOAR, ADRIAN LOURIE

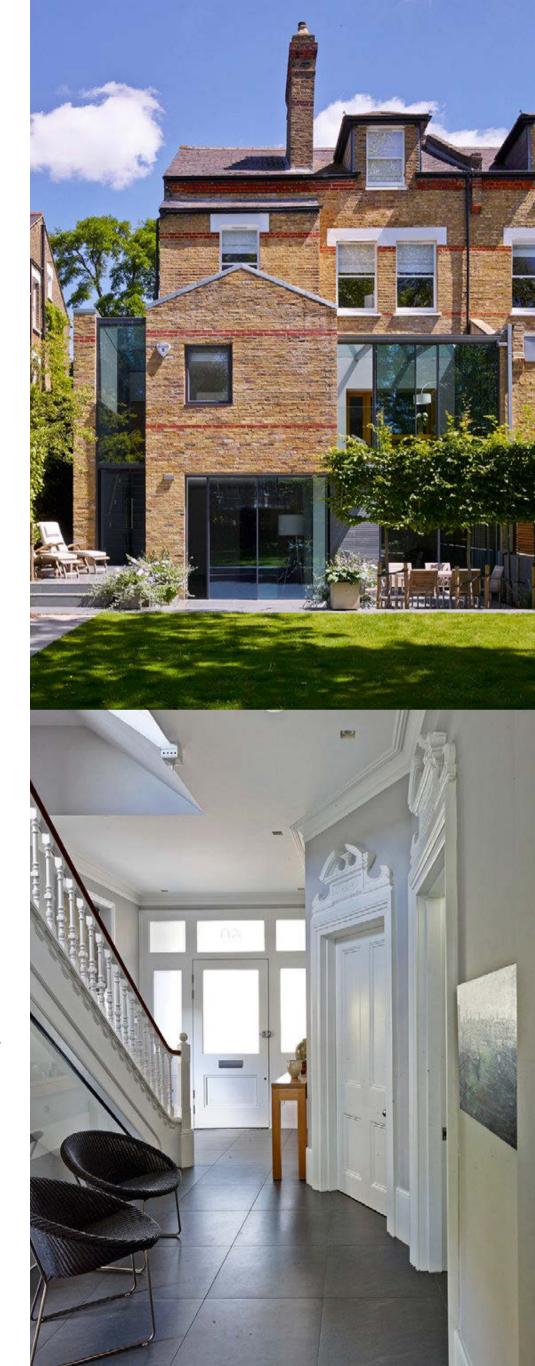
ew of us would buy a house specifically for its basement.
However, when Jack Tucker and his family were looking to move and found a bigger property just around the corner from their old one in Dulwich, southeast London, it was the basement that proved to be the main draw.

Though only 12 minutes from mainline Victoria station by train, the Dulwich Estate has long roads with rose-covered Victorian and Edwardian houses and is incredibly quiet and peaceful. Owners and tenants have to maintain the outsides of their houses in keeping with the area, but are allowed to make changes inside and at the back, which was key to the Tuckers' decision to buy.

The classic semi-detached Victorian family villa the family fell in love with looked tired and the conservatory was past its best, but there was a long garden for the couple's boys, 11, and 14, and plenty of room for growing fruit and vegetables. As the house was set on a slope, it also had a low basement. Although this was windowless at the front and crammed full of bicycles, bins and a washing machine, the Tuckers felt they could do a lot with it. 'The basement took up a quarter of the floor space and was completely underused,' says Jack, a former professional cook and restaurateur.

Jack and his wife, who works in the City, had very clear ideas about what they wanted from the outset. They were keen to dig out the basement at the front and give it a proper light well, while creating a big family room at the back. At upper-ground-floor level they planned to roof over the side return, and open things up to create a light and airy kitchen/dining room kitted out with everything a chef needs – including lots of undercounter storage and a walk-in larder. For this family, the kitchen really is the heart of the home, so they also wanted a woodburning stove. 'You can't beat the sound and sight of a fire,' says Jack.

Next, they needed the right architect to turn their dreams into reality, and they only had to look next \*\*Continued over next page\*







door to find one. Richard Dudzicki had extended and remodelled a neighbour's home, and the Tuckers liked his work so much that they hired him for their extension. Instead of having an ordinary roofed-over side return, Richard suggested making the whole thing a glazed box, with glass balustraded stairs running down to a glass door, which means you can see all the way to the garden.

The kitchen-dining room features white units with grey porcelain tiles on both the floor and wall, and the L-shaped island unit is perfectly placed so the five-burner cooker can be used from all sides. Large windows throw light around the entire cooking and dining area. There are no pots or chef's knives on display – everything is neatly stored away for a clutter-free finish.

In the once-dingy basement, now dug down to create a good ceiling height, huge steels were installed for support and a hi-tech drainage system runs under the house. At the back a big TV room looks directly out to the garden through floor-to-ceiling sliding doors. There's also a shower room — for grubby young footballers—and masses of storage tucked under the glazed stairs. In the centre of the basement the couple have added a utility room.

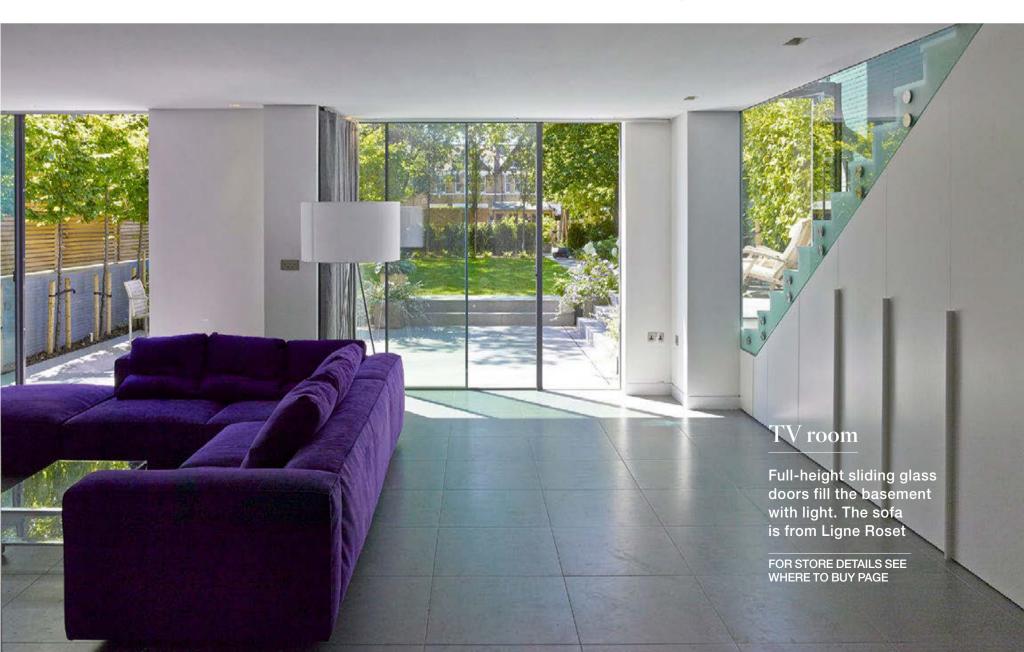
The rest of the house was updated in keeping with the elegant basement, with nods to its history. While the family are delighted with their new space, there were a few disappointments. The ultra-sophisticated lighting system is, says Jack, 'too clever for its own good,' so if he was doing it again, he would try something simpler. And the first lawn died and had to be dug out. However, that wasn't the worst part. Halfway through the works, the builder went out of business. As Jack says, it was like having a half-baked cake and needing a new cook to finish it – quickly.

Luckily, the couple's architect found another builder for whom the Tuckers have the highest praise. 'He really cared about what he did,' says Jack, 'and, like Richard, he's conscious of a good finish.' Find out more about architect Richard Dudzicki at rdauk.com



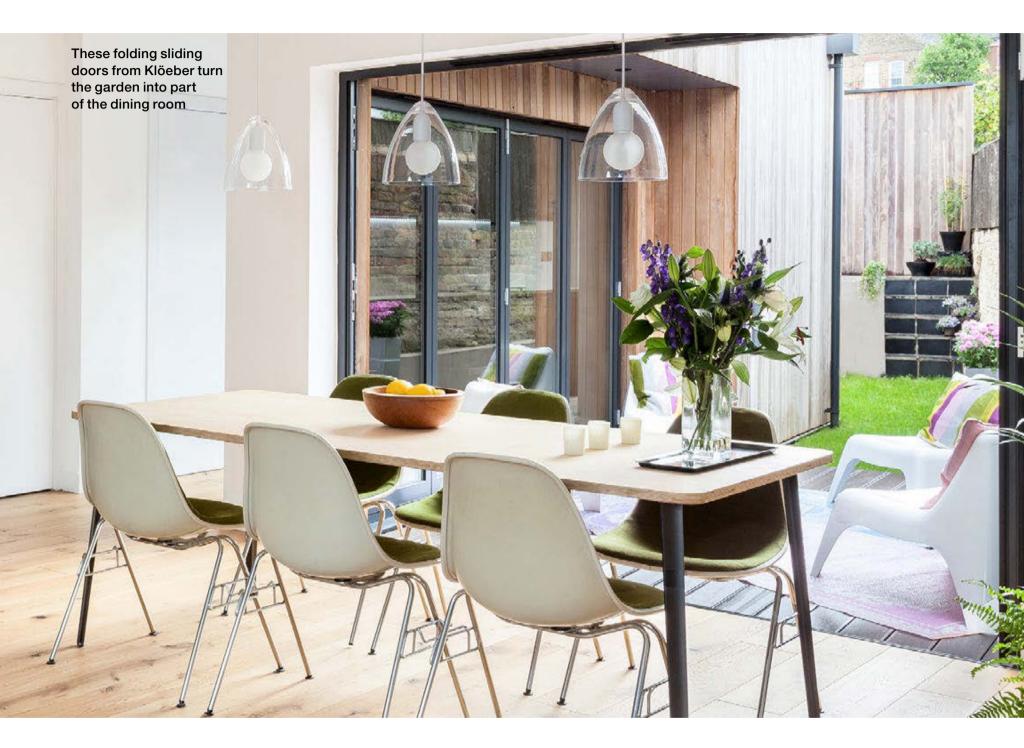


'BOTH ARCHITECT AND BUILDER WERE CONSCIOUS OF a good finish,' SAYS JACK



# OPEN DOORS

Fit glass doors to flood your home with light and connect house and garden



# $\textbf{SLIDING} \ SCALE \ \text{Replacing walls with glass doors brightens a dark space and lends a contemporary feel}$

'Clients are completely buying into the idea of "bringing the outside in" to make the most of their houses with more space and light,' says Matt Higgs, sales director and co-owner of specialist manufacturer Klöeber. 'I don't think there are many new plans drawn by architects that don't include bi-folding doors now.'

Bi-folding doors generally move back to allow up to 90 per cent of a clear opening from inside to outside. Sliding versions allow less of an opening, but are usually a more cost-effective option. Prices depend on size, height and choice of glass and frames – aluminium, wood or composite/uPVC. The thinnest glass is usually the most expensive and uPVC tends to be the cheapest option for frames.

Whether you opt for bi-folding or sliding, there are a host of new styles on the market:

- Express Bi-folding Doors has introduced its slimmest sliding-door system the XP Glide Light, from £1,700. The aluminium-framed door has a sightline (where two frames meet) of just 38mm to make the most of your view outside.
- Klöeber's Timber Eurofold Folding Sliding Doors, from £2,275, meet the

demand for continuous living/garden space by ensuring that the inside-outside threshold is as flush as possible.

- New Wave Slide and Swing Doors in aluminium or uPVC, from £2,000, can be opened one panel at a time for total control of access and ventilation.
- For maximum impact, IQ Glass offers tall aluminium bi-folding doors, with each panel measuring three metres high by 1.2 metres wide, from £500 a square metre. Performance isn't compromised for size; doors are weather-tested for draughts, water resistance and wind loading.

# WEIGHTY ISSUE

# For added light and drama, some doors replace a whole corner of a house.

'We're seeing a trend towards extensions with two sets of doors towards a corner post so that both walls can be opened up to the garden,' says Matt Higgs, sales director and co-owner of Klöeber. This creates an almost seamless view onto the garden, and could be a stunning way to revamp an existing extension; remove the brickwork and door/ window frames and replace them with glass doors. This has structural implications, but expert James King, founder of Oliver James Garden Rooms, outlines the options: 'Cantilever the roof [to deal with weight distribution], and then use a specialist set of doors that close on one another. When these are opened, there's no post in between - you have a wide space and clear view outside.' 'Build a structural post with doors that

open either side of this. This is a much more

build techniques, the post can be as narrow

economical solution. With today's modern

as 10cm wide and hardly visible at all.'





# Get ready to retro-fit

Replacing tired patio doors with new folding or sliding ones could transform your living space. However, according to Ray McGrady, marketing director at SafeChoice, you need to bear in mind the following points when retro-fitting: Decide how many panes of glass and openings you wish to have and where you want them positioned. Would you prefer the doors to open into or out of the room? Think how you'll use the space in the future, and don't assume your furniture will remain in its current position. Account for as many possibilities as you can. What colour frame finish would you like inside and out? Companies now offer ultimate flexibility. For example, you could choose to have a wood-effect finish outside and a white one inside. Check that the wall surrounding the doors is sound and level and that the doors and any frame can be securely fixed. This may require the services of a bricklayer/plasterer. Sliding or bi-folding doors should always be professionally fitted to ensure correct hanging, closure and security. Ideally, use the specialist services of the

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE

company you buy them from.

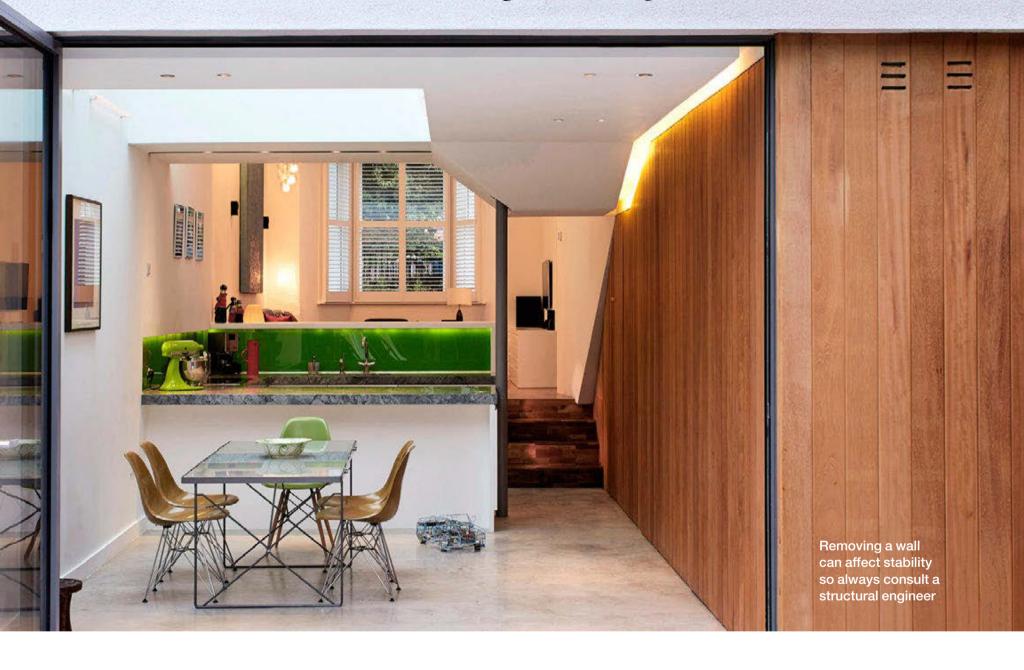


# **STAY SECURE**

Ensure your new doors meet the necessary security standards and don't provide a window of opportunity for burglars. 'Glass doors are vulnerable to being smashed, lifted from the frames or the handles and locks interfered with,' says Mick Reynolds from ACPO's crimeprevention service, Secured by Design. Look for doors that meet the current standard PAS24:2012, which means the glass can't be removed, the door lifted from the frame or the locks attacked. They must also be fitted with laminated glass, which doesn't break but fragments and stays in the frame.' See securedbydesign.com for sources of suitable doors.

# RENOVATING

If you love where you live but want more space, you may be able to rework your current home and turn it into something even more special



ase your decision about how to update your property on what you need, what you can afford and what will increase its value. Loft conversions and extensions are the obvious ways to add square footage, but now there are other options that will improve your home and add space and wow factor.

# $1\,$ going open plan

Knocking through rooms to create one big living area gives you a bright and flexible space. If you plan to remove a wall, you must work out if it's load-bearing as, if it is, it's likely to need a steel beam – often called an RSJ – inserted to carry the weight of the missing wall.

With professional advice from a structural engineer, it's possible to make almost any home open plan. However, if you live in a terrace or flat, you'll need to consider whether alterations to your house could affect your neighbours' property too. Be wary if you're in an area at high risk of subsidence – knocking down a wall can affect stability and may require underpinning. Always seek

professional structural advice and refer to the Party Wall Act 1996. To find a structural engineer, contact The Institution of Structural Engineers (istructe.org).

# **BEAR IN MIND**

• 'Knocking two or three rooms into one will create a greater sense of space and a better flow of light through the whole area,

but you need to consider how you're going to use the room both now and in the future,' says Hugo Tugman, founder of Architect Your Home (architect-yourhome.com). 'Where will the sofa go? How is your other furniture going to be positioned?'

### • Think about how the light falls.

Removing a wall will usually bring more light into this part of your home. However, one end of the new space may be darker than the other, so think how you can tackle this. And will a big through-room affect your privacy?

# $\bullet$ 'You'll still need to create separate

"zones" in an open-plan area,' says Hugo.
'Downstairs you'll usually have three: kitchen, living and dining, so consider how you're going to move within them. The classic mistake is to have a kitchen in the middle of an extension, so you have children running past you to the garden when you're cooking and carrying pans full of boiling water.'

# • A good solution to the zone/privacy/ light issue is to divide the room with sliding panels or moveable screens rather than solid doors, or include 'half walls', which partly section off the space into areas.

- Remember to find a home for the washing machine, vacuum cleaner and other appliances you use on a daily basis.
- A freestanding stove or fireplace can create a gathering point in a big, open space.
- Keep the rest of your house in perspective. Fitting oversized doors can help to bridge the gap between new and old and bring a contemporary feel to your home.
- Don't forget the effect that heating one big room will have on your fuel bills. Underfloor heating is a good option decide between a 'wet' system, which connects to the gas supply, or an electric system. Also consider removing radiators to free up wall space and create a seamless look.

# 2 extending outwards

There are five fundamental choices when it comes to increasing space: loft conversion, basement/cellar conversion, single-height addition, double-height addition, and using the 'side return', which is the dead space at the side of many period houses.

Experts usually suggest that the loft is the most obvious way to go. 'I'd say that pound for pound, a loft conversion is the most effective and economical way to gain significant amounts of space,' says Hugo Tugman, founder of Architect Your Home. The website tradeadvisor.com estimates the average cost of this project at £32,000.

Some extensions can be built without planning permission under permitted development rights. The Government has relaxed the existing rules until 30 May 2016, which means you can build up to six metres on the back of an attached house and up to eight metres on the back of a detached house. However, there may be exceptions to this – if you live in a conservation area, for example – so visit planningportal.gov.uk/permission for guidance and always consult your local authority before you start work.

If you do need permission, expect it to cost around £200 to obtain, assuming there are no major issues such as resubmission required. You should also check your deeds carefully as in some cases there are restrictions over what you can and cannot do to your property. This is important should you come to sell it in the future.

## **BEAR IN MIND**

• Balance the proportions of your home or the new extension will feel as if it's just been bolted on. 'Consider the whole geography of the house and make sure it flows properly,' says Hugo. 'I work this out by making a diagrammatic plan of routes, using coloured pens to draw the lines of movement around the house – this shows you where potential bottlenecks or dead ends might be.'

- You could make a strong style statement with a modern extension such as a glass box on a traditional stone or brick property. A combination of materials can make for a stunning design and integrate beautifully into the existing house. This is where thorough research into use of materials, including the colour of window and door frames, is vital. You should also think about how the house will complement or contrast with surrounding properties. And, of course, if you live in a conservation area, you'll need to keep in contact with the planners.
- Adding extra space will have an impact on your fuel bills, so take advice from a home energy consultant. Contact the Energy Saving Trust (energysavingtrust.org.uk) for information and to find out whether you're eligible for any government grants. If you're planning a glass extension, investigate the range of thermal glass available that keeps heat in and cold out the Glass and Glazing Federation (ggf.org.uk) can help.
- Be realistic about whether your house is suitable for the extension you have in mind. With a basement conversion, for example, the ideal candidate will have an existing basement or cellar, and these are usually properties built before the 1930s. Be flexible and don't allow your heart to rule your head, especially when it comes to finances.

# Smart ideas for ADDING SPACE



### **Double-height extension**

This shouldn't cost twice as much as a single storey, as only one set of footings will have to be dug. You'll also minimise disruption by having the whole job done now, rather than adding a second storey in future. Ask an expert how a double extension would affect the foundations of your house, as these may need strengthening. According to tradeadvisor.com, expect to pay from around £28,960 for a single-storey brick and block-work extension with basic finish, and from £48,240 for a double one, depending on your location.

# Conservatory

This is the easiest – and cheapest – way to expand your home, with basic models starting at £3,000.

#### **Instant extension**

These modular buildings, such as The Qube (theqube.co.uk), are the latest way to add space. Depending on your specifications, they take a lot less time to erect than a traditional extension, and some can even be craned into place.

### Glass box

Typical costs range from £40,000 to £150,000 depending on the size and finish. This can transform a small kitchen into a spacious cooking and dining space, for example, but if your garden is compact it will impinge on your outdoor space.

Continued over page





# **EXPERT ADVICE**

Tommy Walsh, TV builder and House Beautiful expert

'For extensions or open-plan living, the best investment is to have a set of plans drawn up by an architect or planning professional as this will tell you whether you can do what you want to do'

 For help in finding a local architect, see p40

# 3 managing your renovation

The first thing to do is decide how hands-on you want to be. You could fully project-manage the build, using the minimum of tradespeople and relying largely on DIY skills, or bring in a building firm and other contractors but order the materials yourself and organise the timetable. Finally, you could employ professionals and merely choose the decor yourself. The size of the job and how much time you have to spare should determine your decision.

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Take several months to research your project, gathering information on products, suppliers, contractors and plant-hire companies. Ask around and join internet forums to find out about others' experiences of similar work. Make all the decisions about flooring, lighting, wall tiles and so on.
- Have one building company oversee the whole job if possible. Ask to see photographs of previous work or ideally visit them in person, and follow up references in detail. Also discuss who'll be responsible for hiring whom. Never trust a builder who doesn't come round to look at the potential job.
- Get at least three estimates or quotes and understand the difference between the two. An estimate gives more leeway on the price. However, even with a quote, circumstances can change for example, the price of materials can go up so check how long it's valid for. 'Make sure that estimates are on headed paper with the company's full address and telephone number, and confirm whether they include VAT,' says Declan Curran, founder of Homefix Direct.
- Ask your builder to sign a contract that protects both you and him. The FMB has a free downloadable version at fmb.org.uk.
- Agree the payment schedule. TV builder Tommy Walsh is against handing over any

money to a contractor until you're satisfied with the evidence of work. Others argue it's unfair to expect contractors to pay out for materials if the client changes their mind on the specification. In the end it's up to you.

- Consider taking out a Home
  Improvements Guarantee to safeguard
  your money, and to prevent payments to
  your builder and other tradespeople causing
  problems. The scheme, which is backed by
  Tommy, can also help you find a reputable
  contractor. For more information, visit
  homeimprovements guarantee.co.uk.
- Pay particular attention to labour costs when budgeting, as they can vary greatly, and factor in a contingency of at least 10 per cent of the cost of your overall build.
- Draw up a schedule in advance of work starting and display it on a prominent wall during the build so all parties can refer to it.
- Make contact with your local building inspector (also called a district surveyor in some areas) before the build starts and agree the schedule of inspections.
- Ask every contractor you intend to employ to send you a list of what they'll be doing for you, and what materials they'll use. Tommy advises sourcing items yourself as contractors often add a mark-up of around 10-15 per cent. There's nothing to stop you from asking them who they usually use and

contacting the companies yourself. Most suppliers expect to be paid cash on delivery, so have a ready supply for this purpose.

- Have a plan for getting rid of rubbish.
- 'A skip is expensive [from around £150 a day] and can only take a certain amount of waste - usually up to eight tonnes,' says Tommy. 'There's a higher rate to pay for mixed rubbish rather than separated, and this adds to your costs. You may also need a permit to have it on the road in front of your house, and you run the risk of your neighbours throwing half-a-dozen beds into it. You're better off with a self-loading lorry, which can take up to 22 tonnes of rubbish in one go.' See planthireguide.co.uk for local contractors.
- Keep invoices, receipts and plans safe and organised, with copies of insurance certificates from your contractor in case you need them quickly, and check for public liability and employers' liability insurance.

Write up a list of essential contacts and pin them to the wall so they're close at hand.

- Write a diary of the day's events. This helps to ensure that the project is on track and also gives you something to refer to should problems arise with contractors or deliveries.
- Make records of the VAT you've spent as some of this may be reclaimed when the project has finished. There's a useful guide to VAT on building projects at hmrc.gov.uk.
- 'Organise deliveries so you don't have expensive materials left in unlocked places,' says Declan Curran. And check your home insurance to see what it would cover. Some materials require careful handling - eg, timber may need to be seasoned in situ before it can be used - the supplier should be able to help.
- 'Forward plan during the build,' says Declan. 'You need to be constantly thinking ahead.'
- Make sure to validate any guarantees once the renovation is finished.

# FINANCING YOUR PROJECT

The best route to funding your home improvements will depend on the sum you need, when you're able to pay it back, how disciplined you are and your financial record. Here are some of the most common methods you might consider, and the pros and cons of each.

#### **USING YOUR SAVINGS**

If you've got spare cash tucked away it makes sense to use this to avoid racking up interest. Beware of relying on this pot as it can be tricky to estimate the cost of bigger projects.

#### **PUTTING IT ON PLASTIC**

For smaller projects such as installing storage or a new boiler, using a credit card may make sense. You'll be restricted by the limit on the card, but you could opt for one offering zero per cent on purchases to avoid interest payments. David Black from Consumer Intelligence warns: 'If you fail to repay the debt, the rate will jump sharply at the end of the term and other zero per cent deals may not be available.'

### TAKING OUT A LOAN

The cheapest personal loans tend to be for sums of £7,500-£15,000, which may fund a new kitchen or conservatory. You choose the repayment period and monthly payments are fixed for that term. You could borrow £7,500 over three years and pay around £221 per month for 36 months at best-buy rates of four per cent, paying total additional interest of £462. Success in obtaining a loan depends on your financial history so, before applying, make sure your credit file is up to date at a reference agency such as Experian or Equifax. It's possible to borrow up to £25,000, says Andrew Hagger, finance expert at MoneyComms, but larger sums come with higher rates. Also watch out for early repayment fees of typically one month's interest.

# ADDING TO YOUR MORTGAGE

If you're converting your loft or undertaking a massive renovation, you could extend your mortgage with your existing lender or remortgage with another. A broker can help you find the right option, and you can apply for a further advance through them or your current lender. Be aware that lenders have tightened their criteria in recent months. To avoid early redemption penalties for switching, remortgaging may be suitable only for those coming to the end of a fixed-rate deal. Before remortgaging consider arrangement fees, valuation costs and legal work, which can all add up - although you may be able to find a deal that covers some or all of these costs.

#### **EQUITY RELEASE**

Tapping into your home's value to release cash is another path for larger sums. It allows those aged over 55 to borrow against their home, paying interest only when they sell up or die. This method is not without its pitfalls. For example, if you take £50,000 through equity release on your home worth £250,000 at a rate of 6.2 per cent, the interest owed after one year would amount to £3,100. Taking compound interest into account, the interest owed after two years would be 6.2 per cent of £53,100, or £6,392. After 10 years the debt would soar to £91,246 and after 20 years it would stand at £166,518, or nearly 67 per cent of the property value. While the loan may seem small, you risk sacrificing a large stake of your property, so take financial advice before signing up.

# Other ways to get **WOW FACTOR**



#### New windows and doors

Replacing wooden or uPVC window frames with aluminium is quick, cost-effective and thermally efficient. Prices start at around £400.

#### **Exterior finishes**

Cladding has become popular in recent years. Choose from a range of woods, starting with basic untreated softwood at about £5 a square metre, which will need painting or staining, and going up to larch and oak, £20-£35 a square metre, which will age beautifully. For more on cladding, see p92.

Render looks minimalist and clean, but maintenance - especially the upkeep of painting and repairing cracks - can be an issue. There's now a wide range of coloured renders and ones with built-in insulation properties on the market. Contact the Insulated Render and Cladding Association (inca-ltd.org.uk) for more information.

Concrete is hardwearing and striking, but not to everyone's taste, so it could affect the resale price of your property. See sustainableconcrete. org.uk for information on using concrete in building projects.

Bricks come in a range of colours and types and will mellow with age. See brick.org.uk for inspiration.

Stone is durable and you could create a dramatic effect with, say, a glass extension on a traditional stone building. Depending on the style you choose, you may need a specialised tradesman to carry out stonework. To locate one, visit housebeautiful.co.uk and click on Find A Builder.











# The transformation

- **Demolished** garage and conservatory to allow the kitchen to be extended within existing footprint.
- **Increased** existing kitchen space by extending room within the footprint of the old conservatory.
- Married the two spaces with matching flooring and paint, and added comfortable, casual furniture.

### Explain why you decided to extend

As our family grew, the rooms downstairs began to feel cramped, and the dining area looked crowded with storage units, a sofa and a large table all in the small space. We had a double garage at the side of the house and an old conservatory at the back, so knocking those down and extending the kitchen within the same footprint seemed like a good use of space and didn't encroach on the garden.

# What factors did you take into account when designing the new space?

We didn't want to touch the kitchen as we liked it the way it was and replacing it would have been a waste of money. This meant that the extension would start from the end of the kitchen work surface, creating an L-shaped room with bi-fold doors on two sides and a lantern roof light to add interest. A sofa, footstool, sideboard and TV give us a cosy and relaxing living space.

### Did you draw up the plans yourself?

No, a friend recommended a local architect and he did it for us. Essentially, we were adding a large box on the side of the house with a great chunk of the current building remaining undisturbed, but it still took weeks to tweak and get the plans right. They were finally submitted to the council in April, and planning permission was granted in June.

# How did you find your builder?

Friends let me look at their extensions, and I got one particularly glowing report about a builder from a neighbour. She said they were highly skilled, reliable, considerate, tidy and that nothing was too much trouble. She also said they'd stuck rigidly to their quote, which was important for budgeting costs. In the end, I asked five builders to quote, and their estimates ranged from £95,000 to £180,000. The highly recommended builder's quote was at the lower end, so we went with them.

#### **Describe the process**

Work began in October 2013 and for the four months of the build, we were hardly disturbed at all. Our boiler was new when we moved in, but it wasn't big enough for the enlarged space so we got a new boiler for the extension, which meant we always had heating and hot water.

By Christmas, other than having a large steel support across the kitchen ceiling, not much had changed in the old house. The new part, however, was complete, with the roof finished on Christmas Eve. In January the



exterior render went on, new windows were fitted throughout and finally, the walls were removed to blend the new and old together.

# But it still needed finishing off

Once the space was plastered, I got out the paintbrush and painted the new walls a shade darker than the original kitchen. I didn't want to lay new flooring, so I had to find oak planks that matched the ones we already had. We wanted to graft new boards to old at the breakfast bar, but the original supplier no longer stocked the product, and I spent hours on the internet looking for something similar. I ordered multiple samples and was delighted when I found a wonderful match at UK Flooring Direct. Even though the new boards are 5mm wider, we decided to go for it as they were a great match otherwise.

# Tell us how you use the room now

The floor was finally laid in June – the timing was perfect as summer was starting and the bi-fold doors were open all day long. Our kitchen's a wonderful family space and is even better than we'd expected. Once the furniture was in place we didn't use our living room all summer, and year round I sit on a bar stool to work on my laptop – it's a great room.

# Fine details

1 Kitchen The smart, sleek units were left untouched, and the worktop area is now easy to keep clear. A new three-in-one tap provides hot, cold and instant boiling water, making cooking and brewing tea effortless.

2 Table The dining area is now less cramped, and the mismatched blue and white chairs echo the colours used in the rest of the room.

Dresser This bespoke piece fits neatly beside the door that leads to a utility area.

3 Exterior A roof lantern and bi-fold doors make the most of the south-facing position.

# WHAT IT COST

Paint	£161
Extra flooring	£700
Boiling-water tap	£715.95
Radiators	£768
Dresser	£772.60
TOTAL	£3,117.55

**Walls** painted in Pearl Colour Intelligent matt emulsion, £41.50

### SHOPPING LIST

for 2.5L, Little Greene. SOL-FL-GD-004 Florence Solid rustic oak 125mm lacquered flooring, £35 a sq metre, UK Flooring Direct. Salerno White units (already owned), £5,655, Gallery by Symphony. Silestone Antibacterial Quartz Ivory Coast worktop (already owned), £2,981.97, Cosentino. Sterling 1100DF stainless-steel range cooker (already owned), £1,699.99; 1100DCP stainless-steel hood (already owned), £479.99, both Stoves. Glass splashback (already owned), £242; frosted glass shelf/brackets, £62; both Gallery by Symphony. Bolero Box 160D sink, £510.77, Franke. Minerva three-in-one kettle tap, £715.95, Franke at Fairway Kitchens, Sinks & Taps. Colosseum tall HX311 radiator, £296; square HX304 radiators, £236 each; all Ultra Finishing. Dresser unit, £772.60, Jali, painted in Rolling Fog Intelligent eggshell, £23 a litre, Little Greene. Drew side tables, £35 (small); £40 (large); both Habitat. Similar sofa, Ektorp three-seater, £275; similar **footstool**, Ektorp, £75; both Ikea. Similar sideboard, try Bourton painted, £399, The Cotswold Company. Similar dining table, Drio, £650, Habitat. Similar dining chairs, Windsor, £140 a pair, Debenhams. Ingolf bar stools, £45 each; Ribba grey gloss picture frames, £7 (small); £8 (large); both Ikea. Similar pendant light, £70, The Contemporary Home. Quad square clock, £105; Barbican round clock, £95; both Newgate. Windermere salt and pepper mills, £32.49 each, Cole & Mason. Cookie jar, £6.99, Kilner. Knives, from £28.99, Jamie Oliver

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE









# **REAL WOOD**

Beautiful and practical, real wood flooring is an excellent choice for a kitchen extension. Solid boards are durable and have the advantage that if the surface gets damaged, it can be sanded as often as needed.

The alternative is engineered wood, which is made up of several layers, with a decorative real-wood surface. It's more resistant to changes in moisture and temperature, but it will only withstand a couple of sandings.

'Solid and engineered wood will give similar performance in a kitchen, though in a high-traffic area solid wood will last longer,' says Steve Maltby, managing director of Junckers UK. 'Both types can be used with underfloor heating, but do check first if you're fitting solid boards as not all are suitable.'

Oak flooring is a favourite for its warm tones, and it comes in a huge range of colours and textures, including brushed finishes that emphasise the grain. Parquet flooring, made up of interlocking blocks, is a retro style that's on its way back and looks just as good in contemporary rooms as it does in traditional schemes.

# 'Choose wood with a lacquered finish for a dining area as it's better at resisting spillage stains such as wine'

Steve Maltby, managing director, Junckers UK



1 Solid black oak flooring, £68 a sq metre, **Junckers 2** Oak antique distressed pre-oiled engineered flooring, £78 a sq metre, **The Natural Wood Floor Company 3** Walnut Hartford three-strip engineered flooring, £63.60 a sq metre, American Naturals Collection, **Kährs 4** Hampstead brown chevrons engineered oak, £161.82 a sq metre, **Ecora 5** Solid oak parquetry flooring in Sand Dune Smoked, £74.94 a sq metre, **Fired Earth** 

FOR STORE DETAILS SEE WHERE TO BUY PAGE







# The transformation

- **Demolished** an old garage and former kitchen and incorporated both into a new extension (left).
- **Designed** an open-plan, three-zone layout with kitchen, dining and seating areas, and fitted a sleek, functional kitchen with island.
- **Installed** a fabulous roof lantern and bi-fold glass doors to bring masses of light into the kitchen and give easy access to the garden.







#### Tell us about the old kitchen

The whole house was very tired and old-fashioned, and the kitchen was in a small extension towards the back. It had dated wooden units, old appliances and 1980s orange wall tiles – and it was so dark we needed the lights on all day.

# What structural changes did you decide to make?

We thought the garage was a waste of space and wanted to knock it down to incorporate the footprint into our new design – we'd done something similar at our old home. Although we needed planning permission, we hoped we'd end up with a large family kitchen with glass doors leading out to the garden.

# Did you have a clear idea of how you wanted the new room to look?

I like modern, clean decor, and we definitely wanted a big island. I love cooking, and with two children I try to keep things as clutter-free as I can. Good storage was essential for gadgets such as my breadmaker, ice-cream maker and food processor, which take up a lot of room.

How long did it take to get permission?

From first drawings to approval took about six months. Jim is an experienced designer and builder, and he drew up the plans himself. As he was also building the extension, he made sure everything was accurate, drawing up several revisions before we were both happy with the design. The planning department took eight weeks to assess the application, and permission was granted with no quibbles.

A tight build schedule was vital

Jim planned a 24-week schedule for the work, and to his credit, it was finished on time. The first stage was to demolish the garage and dig foundations for the extension. We rigged up a temporary kitchen in the hall, but after about four weeks with two small children – Jake was just four then and Darcey was a baby – and

a building site outside, things were getting difficult. Once the electricity and heating went off we had to move out.

#### You lived offsite

We stayed with my parents briefly, but the timing wasn't great because they were about to move. We had to rent a damp, dingy flat for a month until we could move in with them again in their new house. With a four-year-old just starting school and a baby, it was a bit of a nightmare. If we did it again, I'd plan that side of things better and factor in the cost of renting a reasonable base for the whole time.

# It's a big space so the layout must have required careful planning

It fell quite easily into three areas. The first decision was where to put the table so we could plan the wiring for the pendant lighting. I didn't want to block access to the garden, so having the sofa near the folding doors gives us flexibility. That left plenty of wall space for units and room for the island



at the other end. The island separates the functional kitchen from the dining table and shelf unit, which is more decorative. The sofa is the place to relax, facing one of the fish tanks and overlooking the garden.

# Is there anything you'd change? I'm pleased with almost everything, although the tap is a bit fiddly. I chose it for its angular look, which I love, but I always have to show people how to work it.

# Your favourite feature?

It's a large room, with no natural light at the kitchen end, so the roof lantern is a real success. It's right above the work area and makes a huge difference. The folding doors are fantastic, too. It's like being able to take the entire wall away and open the room to the garden.

# Now it's finished, what's your verdict?

The whole space works brilliantly for a family. We can relax in here and entertain friends, too. Most people who come in say, 'Wow!', so I feel very lucky.

# Fine details

1 Internal accessories Simple drawer dividers allow storage to be tailored to suit the contents, maximising space. 2 Shelving Inspired by a picture in a magazine, Jim designed and built the shelf unit, which is neatly recessed into the wall. **3 Flooring** Practical porcelain tiling with a slight texture provides a durable, non-slip, low-maintenance floor. Breakfast bar The family-friendly breakfast bar adds another function to the island. Extractor Stylish and modern, the extractor features multiple speeds and integral lighting. Wall units Tall, glossy olivewood cabinetry creates wow factor at one end, and houses all the main appliances, plus storage. Sink The minimal, linear styling of the kitchen is reflected in the rectangular double sink and chic, right-angled tap. Visit burtonneale.com for more information on Jim's company.

# WHAT IT COST

Build cost	£50,000
Kitchen units	
Kitchen worktop	£2,200
Appliances	
Sink and tap	£413
Flooring	£2,100
Bi-fold doors	£6,000
TOTAL	£79,112

## SHOPPING LIST

Walls painted in Dulux Nutmeg White silk emulsion, £19.99 for 2.5L, Homebase. Cucina Colore Corinthian white porcelain floor tiles, £40 a sq metre, Stone of London. Futura cabinets in Olivewood Gloss and Pergamon Gloss, £360 for a 60cm base unit, Mereway Kitchens. Star Galaxy granite worktop, £600 a metre, Diapol. Bespoke aluminium bi-fold doors, £6,000, Express Bifolding Doors. Neff electric double oven, £642; Neff 29cm-deep stainless-steel warming drawer, £370; Neff 90cm slimline four-zone induction hob, £722; all Appliances Direct. Similar microwave, Neff (H53W60N3GB), £287, Currys. Baumatic extractor, discontinued; for similar try the Baumatic Pythagora extractor, £279, Appliances Direct. Whirlpool fridge-freezer, discontinued; for similar try the LG American-style premium steel fridge-freezer, £1,099, John Lewis. Caple Zero 150 1.5-bowl stainlesssteel sink, £244; Abode Vixo monobloc tap, £169; both Taps UK. Aurora pendant lights, discontinued; for similar try the Enola brushed aluminium pendant, £38.50, Lighting Direct. Similar dining table and chairs, try Baku, £995, Furniture Village. Vittorio Anthracite Grey corner sofa group, £999, made.com. Bespoke shelf unit, £1,900, Burton Neale. Niagara bar stools, £49.50 each, Atlantic Shopping. Wall-mounted aquarium, about £1,200, Aquavista

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# THE DRAWER THAT LOVES DOING THE DISHES

# DESIGNED TO TURN A CHORE INTO A PLEASURE

We live life out of drawers and as every good cook knows a tidy kitchen is a happy kitchen. If kitchens are being redesigned around drawers, it makes sense that dishwashers are as well. That's why we invented a drawer right by your side that loves doing the dishes, making cleaning up as enjoyable as cooking itself. All DishDrawers™ come with a 5 year parts and labour warranty.\* Live life. We'll take care of the details.

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1 Baobab honed limestone in Papyrus (600mm x 300mm), £89.70 a sq metre, **Ca' Pietra**2 Lucca Pinta travertine-effect porcelain (500mm x 250mm), £34.96 a sq metre, **Mandarin**Stone 3 Slate-effect tile (200mm x 200mm), £25.99 a sq metre, **Homebase 4** Tamil silver brushed marble (305mm x 610mm), £64.45 a sq metre, **Topps Tiles**5 Structure cream column marble (298mm x 298mm), £349.96 a sq metre, **Fired Earth** 

Continued over page



# STYLISH STONE

• Stone tiles bring a timeless feel and an element of luxury to a bathroom when used on both walls and floors, with hardwearing travertine, limestone and slate looking good for years

with hardwearing travertine, limestone and slate looking good for years.

• Marble is making a comeback, both in large-scale tiles featuring delicate veining and in intricate designs such as basketweave or herringbone effects and hexagons. Two or three formats used in combination will create a distinctive scheme, with a stone skirting or dado providing the perfect finishing touch.

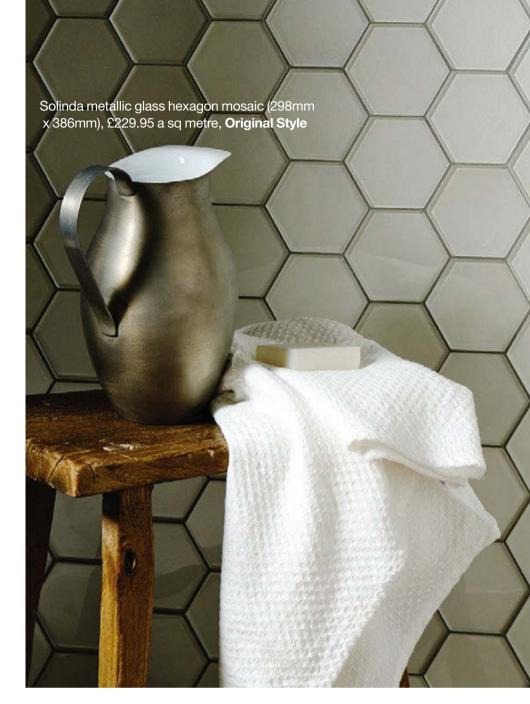
• Since natural stone isn't waterproof, it must be sealed after fitting to protect

it against splashes. And in a shower area, a waterproof backerboard should be fitted before the tiles are put up.
• For all the beauty of stone in an easy-care form, it's worth considering ceramic lookalikes. 'Porcelain is the hardest and most durable of all ceramic tile materials and is the preferred option for most floor tiles,' says Steve Whitehurst, sales and marketing director at Craven Dunnill. 'Due to advances in technology, thin porcelain tiles are now available with a depth of around 5mm – these are lightweight

and can be used on internal walls.'

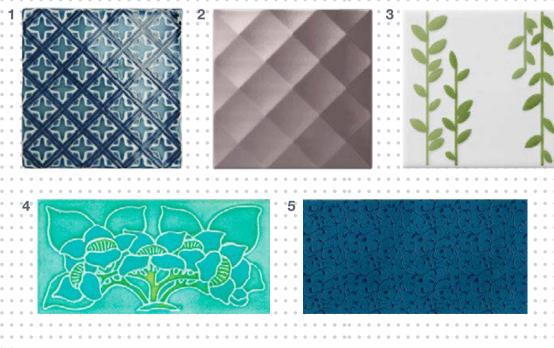
Savoy Décor ceramic tiles (top) in Leaf SAV08D (300mm x 100mm), £41.75 a sq metre; Savoy ceramic tiles in Leaf SAV08A (300mm x 100mm), £34.79 a sq metre; both **Johnson Tiles** 





# **SURFACE DESIGN**

The new breed of patterned and textured tiles are great for sophisticated feature walls, with raised 3D surfaces that reflect the light in different ways to create subtle pattern. 'Textured tiles are a hot trend right now, and the new Conran collection encapsulates this, using structured forms to add a tactile quality to walls,' says Jayne Adamson, senior product manager at British Ceramic Tile. Look out too for ribbed designs, satin glazes and matt effects. Ceramic tiles come in a vast array of sizes, from small-scale mesh-mounted mosaics to huge slabs. By experimenting with shapes and formats, you can create individual effects. Large-scale tiles lend a room boutique-hotel chic, with minimal grout lines breaking up the space. Alternatively, a wall of plain tiles looks stylish when interrupted by a strip of glistening mosaics. To personalise a scheme, choose the latest hexagons, pencil-width strips, interlocking rectangles or shapely curved designs.



1 Behen On Papyrus ceramic tile (130mm x 130mm), £262.55, Chateaux collection, The Winchester Tile Company 2 Fractal Ridge ceramic tile in Poise Gloss (198mm x 198mm), £33.60 a sq metre, Tiles by Studio Conran collection, British Ceramic Tile 3 Colours Kiwi ceramic tile (100mm x 100mm), £2.98 each, B&Q 4 Clematis ceramic tile (152mm x 76mm), £13.99 each, V&A William de Morgan collection, Homebase 5 Lxion Blue/Black Gloss LX102E ceramic tile (560mm x 305mm), £34.75 a sq metre, made to order by Johnson Tiles

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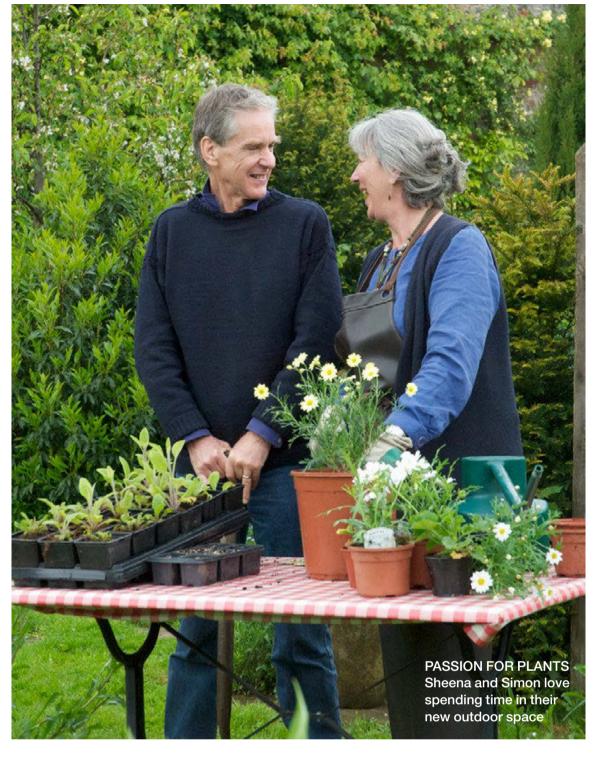












# The transformation

- Cleared the former car park.
- Laid paving to create a patio area beside the house.
- **Designed** a garden with winding paths and lush, abundant planting.

hen Sheena and Simon Loveday, both in their sixties, moved to their new home in Wells, Somerset, they were full of enthusiasm and ideas for transforming the barren land surrounding the house.

There was no doubt it was going to be an enormous undertaking. High stone walls surrounded the south-facing plot, sheltering it and giving it lots of potential, but the house had previously been a pub, and the garden had been its car park. When Sheena and Simon bought it, the site was littered with ancient stone, some of the remains of tenement buildings dating back to the 1800s and an old skittle alley, and mounds of rubble and debris.

However, the couple could see past the mess and had a vision of turning the dilapidated plot into a stunning Italianstyle garden. With the help of local plantswoman Helen Johnson, they created a design that would both reflect Sheena's country upbringing and change dramatically with the seasons.

The Lovedays' immediate priority was to create privacy. Once the site had been cleared, they built a beautiful courtyard wall using stone from around the garden. Into this they fitted a bespoke mullion window from local company Redwood Stone. This window, Sheena says, 'creates a truly individual, period structure and has given the garden not only the privacy we needed, but also a romantic and reflective feel.'

During the long, snowy winter months of 2009, the hard landscaping started to take shape. Raised beds were built in stone and oak and filled with tons of topsoil brought in by lorries, ready for vegetables to be planted. The Lovedays even sank a water tank beneath the raised beds to take the rainwater from the roof of the house. By the end of January 2009, Helen and the couple were able to start planting, and here Sheena takes up the story.



# YEAR ONE PLANTING BEGINS

January My family gave me Christmas presents of trees. I remember the excitement of planting a stone pine, an olive, Italian cypresses and lots of yew hedging for screening the car park area. We plant yews each side of the archway to look like gateposts. Autumn raspberries go in.

February Helen works tirelessly and even manages to lay the lawn in the snow. She remains unremittingly cheerful! We choose hornbeams to create a hedge at the far end of the garden, and buy birches with long silver trunks to put into planters in the drive. It's all hard going in the cold winter.

March Yew hedging and roses start going in. Our fingers are numb from putting up wires on the old stone walls. It's still cold, but we plant the fruit trees and attach espalier pear trees and climbing roses onto new wires. We also start to plant roses 'Mme Alfred Carrière', 'Phyllis Bide' and 'Malvern Hills' across the pergola.

April At last the grass seed is sown to tidy up the lower garden. Vegetable areas and some herbaceous plants go in. We have no shrubs anywhere in this scheme. I can't explain why, but I just dislike them.

May Generally, this is the

May Generally, this is the month of maintenance. We're busy weeding (not too hard as all the soil is new) and planting in the small herbaceous plot.

June We level the area for the gravel garden, mixing a little bit of soil with small gravel to create the Mediterranean dry bed. The lavenders go in, together with masses of white cosmos for the autumn.

July We pave the side entrance to the house and put herbs around the edges to create scent when you drive in. Silver-leaf cardoons look fantastic, adding tone and structure – they're the easiest things to grow, and they are spectacular all through the winter months as well.

August Time for the first cut and shape of the Portuguese laurel cubes in the driveway. Lavender will be trimmed in subsequent years. We've planted six cypress trees and

they love the dry conditions. The view through the stone mullions in the courtyard wall is stunning right now with the cypresses and lavender. September The cosmos have gone mad. Now's a lazy time of year with hot afternoons and, when it cools down, I can get on with deadheading. It feels as if we're in a Mediterranean courtyard - hot! The bees are absolutely loving the planting. October We plant the bulbs irises and foxtail lilies among the lavenders. The coral colour will look sensational next to 'Phyllis Bide' next year. We're constantly imagining how it will look in the future.

**November and December** A quiet time for cutting back and clearing. *Continued over page* 







# YEAR TWO THE GARDEN TAKES SHAPE

# January/February/March

It's another cold winter but the strength of the design is still apparent. Cypresses and yews look terrific with snow on them. I decide to have a go at planting a kumquat tree on the far side of the gravel garden behind the wall. Structure is everything in this garden where there are no shrubs, especially in winter. It's very important to keep digging over the compost as much as I can.

**April/May** In the raised beds we plant vegetables including peas, carrots, spinach and broad beans. We also plant cosmos seeds in trays, and it's time to feed the lawn.

June/July/August The roses are growing like mad and are already up to the tops of the wires. Gosh, more wires are needed! The 'Phyllis Bide' is blooming with the foxtail lilies alongside it in the gravel garden, and lots of sweet

rocket, alliums and geraniums are springing up in the raised beds in the courtyard. 'Boule de Neige' roses are making a splash with their beautiful pink edging. We also have a mammoth harvest of peaches. Autumn Now the garden's really establishing itself and flourishing. All of the fruit trees - except the kumquat - are in their first fruiting. Unfortunately we discover that there could be a patch of polluted soil, where perhaps the pub owners had discarded some old

batteries and rubbish. We're not completely sure about this, but we decide that in any case we will clear this patch and put in some fresh soil.

Winter Now everything in the garden starts to go to sleep, but the structure is still there and looking great. The frost seems to transform the garden all over again, and when I look out through the window it looks wonderfully magical. I feel we both deserve a good rest now – after we cut back and clear once again.

# YEAR THREE EVERYTHING'S FLOURISHING

Spring/summer The garden is starting to spring into life again. All the flowers are flourishing day by day. I'm once again enjoying spending as much time as possible outside, potting on nursery plants, deadheading and weeding. The soft white cosmos that spills out of the pots and beds looks so glorious against all the varying shades of green.

Autumn/winter Once again the garden lies dormant for a few months, but we're enjoying its stillness. The cypress trees have grown significantly, and the cardoon still looks great.

# YEAR FOUR WECAN REALLY ENJOY IT NOW

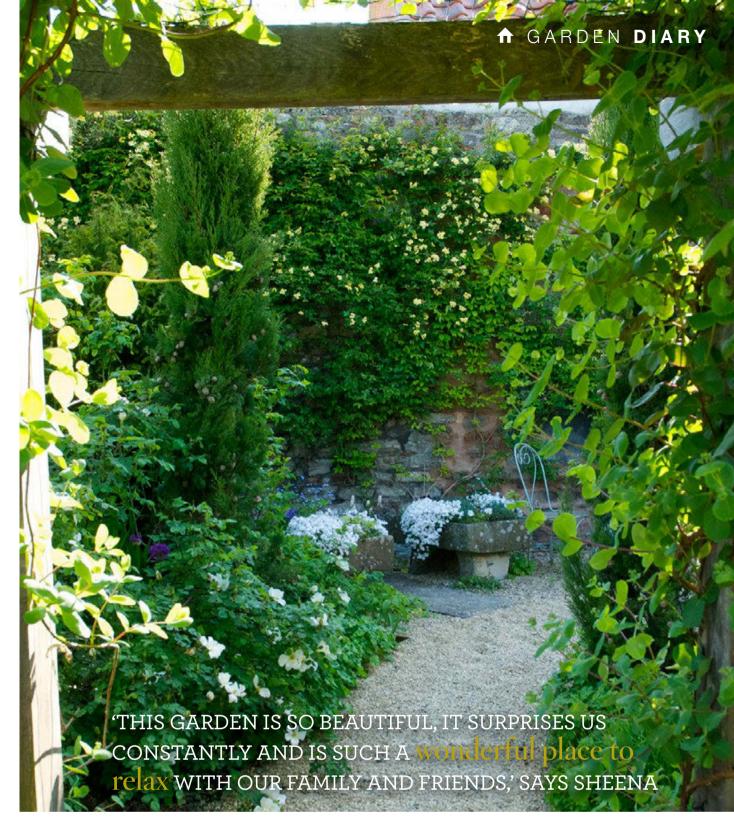
January/February The yew, cypress and Californian lilac are established now and give welcome shelter to the birds. Even in winter, the scent is heady when I walk by.

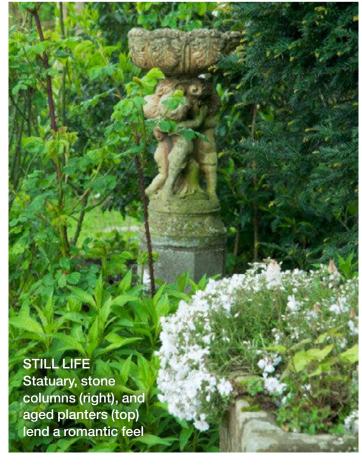
March/April It's been very mild with hardly any snow.

Winter-flowering pansies and the chocolate akebia bring a welcome touch of colour to the courtyard.

May/June I enjoy meandering past the vegetable beds, where I'm welcomed by the aroma of the 'Malvern Hills' rose, lavender and the glorious honeysuckle cascading down from the pergola. Now it's established, the garden's looking different again. Most trees and hedges have grown a foot every year, and it's a haven for wildlife.

Simon said to me, 'The growth is phenomenal for a garden that's only three years old'. I think it comes from the new soil, sheltered southfacing aspect, and the right plants for the conditions. It's so beautiful, it surprises us constantly and is such a wonderful place to relax with our family and friends.

















nterior designer Sarah Allchorn, 50, moved into her cottage in west Oxfordshire in 2011. Like the house, the garden was run-down and hadn't been tackled for 25 years. While the building was being transformed into a light and spacious home for Sarah and her 20-year-old triplets, Alexander, Amelia and Phoebe, she set about redesigning the garden.

### What was your starting point?

My house is a stone cottage built in the 1830s. On a visit to Sweden I found the small village houses and gardens there tremendously inspiring, so I decided to incorporate some of those ideas into my own home. The cottage interior is in pale grey and varying shades of white and I wanted the garden to reflect this. It's important, especially in a relatively small space, to have continuity of design from the house to the garden, so one flows from the other. While I was waiting for planning permission to add an extension, I made a start on the garden. My aim was to create a fun space that was architecturally interesting and easy to maintain.

# Why did you lower the main seating area?

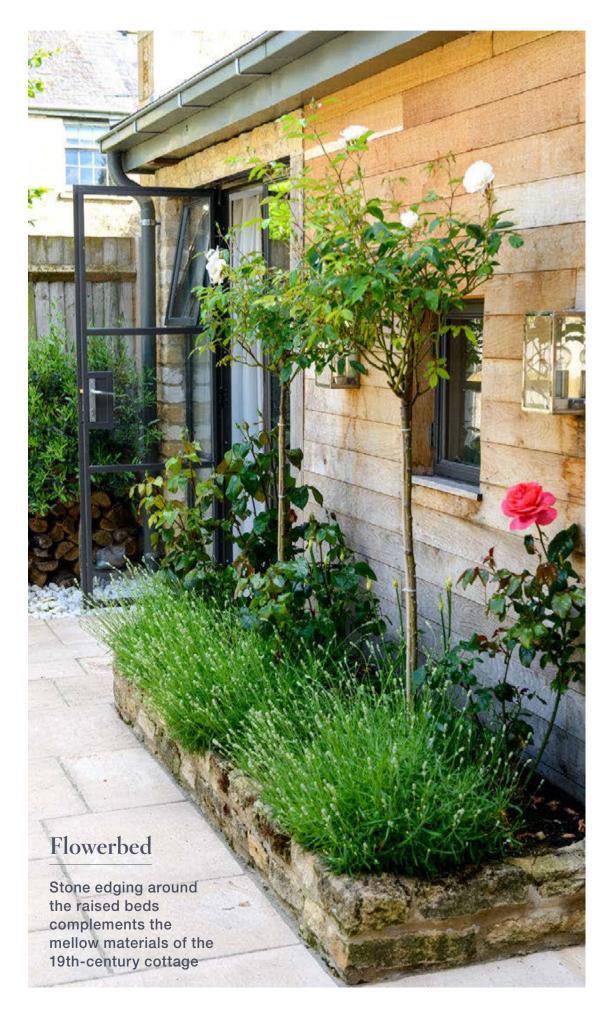
At eight metres by seven metres, the garden's quite small, so I needed differing heights to create interest. The pergola also provides a separate casual seating area.

# You decided against having a traditional lawn and flowerbeds...

Yes, my last house had a five-acre-plus garden and took a great deal of looking after, so I wanted a low-maintenance space this time.

### Where there any special considerations?

Privacy was important, so I planted pleached hornbeams in front of the fence, which effectively create a narrow hedge above it. As they keep their leaves in the winter, they make an excellent screen. I also have seating for 10, a herb garden, pergola, barbecue area and a pond with a bubbling water feature, because sound is as important as look and smell. And, of course, I planted plenty of my favourite flowers – scented roses, lavender and camellias. *Continued over next page* 





#### Were there any problems?

I managed the project and used the same builders who did the house. Their main problem was the access through a very narrow side gate, so they used the smallest digger possible. Although working with a small piece of equipment was time-consuming, they were marvellous and completed the main work in just two weeks. As with any project, it's important to have a schedule in place, and I was there to oversee last-minute details.

# Why did you choose these materials?

Maintaining the gorgeous creaminess of Cotswold stone was important for the low walls and paving, but I also wanted a contemporary feel, again reflecting the cottage interior. Combining wood, stone and zinc seemed the perfect choice.

#### Tell us about the storage

I bought two sentry sheds for garden items. One has a plumbed-in hosepipe and the other houses tools – and they look cool.

# What would be your advice before starting a redesign?

It's helpful to make a garden plan, just as you would for the interior, drawing to scale all aspects for the tradespeople to work from and including all electrical positions and any water supplies needed. The build then flows easily and quickly.

# Did you have a planting and colour scheme in mind before you started?

I went for mainly white and pink with touches of blue from lavender. I've trained vines to grow over the pergola, intermixed with a pink and white clematis on each side. The Adirondack chairs add casual seating beneath. At certain times of the day, it's in the shade and is a comfortable place to sit and relax. It was important to plant a herb garden close to the kitchen, as I love cooking – there's tarragon, purple sage, marjoram and thyme, to name just a few. I also have a pot of mint – it's a good idea to keep it separate, as it will take over if planted in a bed. The garden's a peaceful, beautiful space that I enjoy all year round.



'I'VE TRAINED VINES TO GROW OVER THE PERGOLA, INTERMIXED WITH A PINK AND WHITE CLEMATIS ON EACH SIDE. THE ADIRONDACK CHAIRS ADD CASUAL SEATING BENEATH. AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE DAY, IT'S IN THE SHADE AND IS a comfortable place to sit and relax,' SAYS SARAH

# WHERE TO BUY

Adirondack chairs in white, £250 each; garden seat pads, £60 each; garden chairs around table, £95 each; all Style Infusion. Garden table, £450, Burford Garden Company. Shed, for similar try Garden Store Direct. Lights, for similar try Ace Lamps. Similar water feature, £99, UK Water Features. Similar wire baskets, from £25, The Old Pill Factory







# All in the detail

Clockwise from top left Pink peonies are one of Sarah's favourite flowers; the pond is an ideal habitat for wildlife and a water feature creates a calm, peaceful mood; Sarah's 'Pretty in Pink' rose stands out against the soft tones of the timber cladding; the alpine plants make an attractive display on the table, while a mix of wire baskets and polished metal containers add a vintage touch; wisteria clings to the side of the house; Sarah has a woodburning stove in her sitting room, so she stacks logs outside the back door for easy access

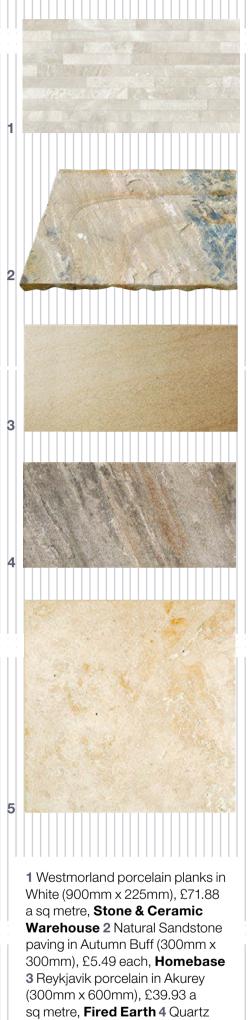
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design R12 outdoor in Silver (605mm x 300mm), from £58 a sq metre, Renaissance collection, Craven Dunnill 5 Corinth tumbled exterior travertine (406mm x 406mm), £39.64 a sq metre, Mandarin Stone

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# **SMART FENCING**

- Mainly used for protection and privacy, the right style of fencing will enhance the look of your home, too.
- Lap panels with vertical battens and rows of horizontal boards are the type we're all familiar with; they come in standard widths and various heights.
- Add trellis to the top and encourage climbing plants to clamber along. Their leaves will gently filter the light.
- A picket fence of vertical pales with

gaps between is less practical in terms of security or privacy but is a pretty addition.

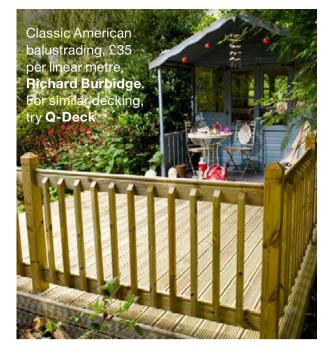
- For a smart, contemporary look, horizontal boards can be made up into screens on a heavy-duty mortise and tenon jointed framework.
- If you prefer natural screening, opt for attractive willow or hazel panels.
- Close boarding consists of vertical panels nailed to horizontal arris rails, creating a sturdy fence.



Pale gate (H90cm x W90cm), £54.99; pale fence panel (H90 x W183cm), £24.99; both **Forest** 



Grange timber domed gate (H105cm x W90cm), £45, **B&Q**. Grange Elite St Esprit panels, from £50.95, **Kebur** 



# **MODERN DECKING**

# A wooden deck or platform looks fabulous

in a contemporary garden and is straightforward enough for a DIYer to successfully complete. A ground-level deck is easiest to lay. If you're building an elevated one, it's a good idea to add a balustrade and steps as well.

There is a huge choice of materials available now, but these are the most common options: Hardwood is long lasting and weather resistant; look out for oak, birch, elm or cherry, or choose water-resistant teak. Softwood decking, made from spruce, fir or cedar, is a more affordable choice. Composite decking is made from recycled wood fibres and plastics; it won't splinter, rot or warp. Solid PVCu decking is also rot-proof and won't warp or crack, and it comes in a choice of cedar, driftwood and sandalwood finishes so it can look like natural wood grain.

Anti-slip finishes include narrow strips of resin

and aggregate inserted into the decking's grooves, and wider strips that you can screw to existing boards to give good grip in wet weather. It's reasonably easy to build a deck yourself.

When assembling the frame and attaching the boards, remember to coat the cut ends with end-grain preserver. Laying boards parallel to the back wall of the house will emphasise the width of the deck; run them at a right angle to make the deck look deeper, or try a diagonal pattern for interest. If the deck meets the house, its top must come below the damp-proof course, and be careful not to cover any air bricks when laying it. To preserve the colour of your new addition, treat it with a penetrating decking oil.

# **EXPERT TIP**

Before constructing the deck, don't forget to lay weed-control fabric below to stop plants coming through

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# ON THE COVER

Cover photograph Mark Scott Styling Kiera Buckley-Jones

For a similar **table**, try Vintage Industrial Furniture. CH42 Wishbone **chairs** by Hans J Wegner for Carl Hansen, from a selection at SCP, Skandium and The Conran Shop. Whitstable high stool, £195, Mathers & Hirst at Heal's. Bespoke **rug** made from JT100 Jute Herringbone Natural, £39 a sq metre; and LT11 Linen Twill Nutmeg border, £16.40 per metre; both Crucial Trading. For similar **floor lamp**, try The Conran Shop. Basket weave **cushion**, £30; basket weave throw, £70; Harris runner, £20; large square **bottle**, £50; marble **pinch pots**, £25 for two; Colonsay 16-piece cutlery set, £50; all John Lewis. Parisian blue napkins, £7.50 each, The Linen Works. Bardo placemats, £15 for four; Chisel

green textured ceramic vase, £18; Garda grey ceramic vase, £10; all Habitat. Stack of plates, from 12-piece Blaize dinner set, £49.50, Marks & Spencer. Wonki Ware organic sand extra large paella **dishes**, £85 each, The Conran Shop. Celadon ivory green speckle bowl, £55; Ivalo dome with ash base, £82; both Heal's. Salad server (from the Riso bowl in Ash), £22.95; London chopping board, £55; both Folklore. On island: Amalfi salad bowl, £29, Brissi. Dove grey napkin, £7.50; tablecloth fringe, £110; both The Linen Works

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**Design Space Architecture** 01226 762697; designspacearchitects.co.uk **Diapol** 020 8144 4650; diapol.co.uk **Duravit** 0845 500 7787; duravit.co.uk **Ecora** 020 7148 5265; ecora.co.uk

Ecoscreed 01372 842102; ecoscreed.co.uk

Express Bi-folding Doors

0800 121 4809; expressbifolds.co.uk **Fakro** 01283 554755; fakro.co.uk

**Fired Earth** 0845 366 0400;

firedearth com

**Folklore** 020 7354 9333; shopfolklore.com

Forbo 0800 731 2369; forbo.com/flooring/en-uk

Forest 0333 321 3135; forestgarden.co.uk

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**Furniture Village** 0800 804 8879;

furniturevillage.co.uk **Futureform** 01903 755015;

futureformltd.com

Gaggenau 0344 892 8988;

gaggenau.com **Gallery by Symphony** 01226 446000;

symphony-group.co.uk **Garden Store Direct** 01253 836594;

gardenstoredirect.com **Habitat** 0344 499 1111; habitat.co.uk

**Heal's** 020 7896 7451; heals.co.uk

**Heb Homes** 0141 550 7360; hebrideanhomes.com

Heliobus heliobus.com

Homebase 0345 077 8888; homebase.co.uk

Homefix Direct 0800 092 1105;

homefix-direct.com

**Huf Haus** 01932 586550; huf-haus.com/en

Ikea 020 3645 0000; ikea.co.uk

IQ Glass 01494 722880; iqglassuk.com

Jali 01227 833333; jali.co.uk

**Jamie Oliver** 0870 160 1319;

iamieoliverskitchenkit.com **John Lewis** 0345 604 9049;

iohnlewis.com

**Johnson Tiles** 01782 575575;

johnson-tiles.com

Julian Owen Associates Architects

0115 922 9831; julianowen.co.uk

**Junckers** 01376 534700; junckers.co.uk

Kährs 023 9245 3045; kahrs.co.uk Karndean Designflooring

01386 820100; karndean.com

**Kebur** 01252 517571; kebur.co.uk Kilner 0151 486 1888: kilneriar.co.uk

Kirk Natural Stone Developments

01888 511399; kirknaturalstone.com

**Klöeber** 01487 740044; kloeber.co.uk

**Legacy Windows** 0117 907 4801; newwavedoors.co.uk

**Lighting Direct** 0843 317 7824;

lighting-direct.co.uk **Ligne Roset** 01494 545910;

liane-roset.co.uk

Linen Works (The) 020 7819 7620;

thelinenworks.co.uk

Lite Spot (The) 01226 730254;

litespot.co.uk

Little Greene 0845 880 5855; littlegreene.com

**Luke Irwin** 020 7730 6070; lukeirwin.com



**made.com** 0345 450 6118

**Mandarin Stone** 01600 715444; mandarinstone.com

Marks & Spencer 0333 014 8000;

marksandspencer.com

**Mereway Kitchens** 0121 706 7844; merewaykitchens.co.uk

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mumfordwood.com Natural Wood Floor Company

**(The)** 020 8871 9771;

naturalwoodfloor.co.uk

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**nest.co.uk** 0114 243 3000; nest.co.uk **Newgate** 01691 679994;

newgateclocks.com

**Norcroft Energy** 01226 763127;

norcroftenergy.co.uk

Oakwrights 01432 353353;

oakwrights.co.uk **Old Pill Factory (The)** 01993 701013;

theoldpillfactory.com Oliver James Garden Rooms

01908 367177; oliverjames-build.co.uk

Original Style 01392 473000;

originalstyle.com

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orme-architecture.com **Paul Barrow** 01924 781629;

paulbarrow-kitchens.co.uk

**Pergo** 0844 811 8288; pergo.co.uk

Pilkington pilkington.com Poggenpohl 020 7902 5245;

poggenpohl.com/en **Potton** 01767 676400; potton.co.uk

**Q-Deck** 0800 849 6339; qualitydecking.co.uk

Quick Step 0032 56675211;

quick-step.com

Rais rais.com **Redwood Stone** 01749 677777;

redwoodstone.co.uk

**Richard Burbidge** 01691 678300;

richardburbidge.com Right Choice Renewables 01633

647850 or 01392 409208; rightchoicerenwables.co.uk **SafeChoice** 0800 024 6230:

safechoice.co.uk

**Sanderson** 0844 543 9500; sanderson-uk.com

Scandia-Hus 01342 838060; scandia-hus.co.uk

**SCP** 020 7739 1869; scp.co.uk **Silva** 01895 271300; silvatimber.co.uk

**Skandium** 020 7935 2077; skandium.com

South Bank Architects 020 7028 6144

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glassbalustrades.co.uk **Stilart** 00 49 2244 925880;

stilart-moebel.com/en Stone & Ceramic Warehouse

020 8993 5545; stoneandceramic

warehouse.co.uk **Stone of London** 01923 856100;

stoneoflondon.com

**Stoves** 0844 815 3740; stoves.co.uk

**Style Infusion** 01993 832031; styleinfusion.co.uk

**Taps UK** 0843 713 0200; tapsuk.com

**Topps Tiles** 0800 783 6262;

toppstiles.co.uk

Traditional Stone 01924 416666; traditionalstonesupplies.co.uk

**UK Flooring Direct** 0844 327 0000; ukflooringdirect.co.uk

**UK Water Features** 01226 388889; ukwaterfeatures.com

**Ultra Finishing** 01282 436934; ultra-group.co.uk

**Urban Roof Gardens** 0800 652 8848;

urbanroofgardens.com Velfac 01223 897100; velfac.co.uk **Velux** 01592 778225; velux.co.uk

Vincent Timber 0121 772 5511; vincenttimber.co.uk

Vintage Industrial Furniture 0121 459 7093; vintage-industrial-

furniture.co.uk **Vitra** 01235 750990; vitra.co.uk

Water Monopoly (The) 020 7624

2636; thewatermonopoly.com Welsh Oak Frame 01686 688000;

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